

## UCU Survey on GTP (central/regional staff)

February 2017

Following an initial email survey to AL members, for which see the separate report, UCU used SurveyMonkey to set up an anonymous survey (using for information about the impact of GTP on central and regional/national staff). This was open between 31 October and 28 November 2016. There were 155 responses. While some patterns and trends were observable with regard to central and regional/national academics, the main usefulness of this survey material is in the qualitative responses.

### Number of Responses and Background of Respondents

Question 1: Respondents were from all of the OU's existing regional and national offices.

Although the survey was titled 'Impact of GTP on non-AL staff', 28 of the respondents identified themselves as ALs. Some of these were ALs who also hold unit roles.

What is your location?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Walton Hall, Milton Keynes	27.1%	42
The OU in London, Camden	10.3%	16
The OU in the South, Oxford	1.3%	2
The OU in the South West, Bristol	13.5%	21
The OU in the West Midlands, Birmingham	2.6%	4
The OU in the East Midlands, Nottingham	3.2%	5
The OU in the East of England, Cambridge	7.1%	11
The OU in Yorkshire, Leeds	2.6%	4
The OU in the North West, Manchester	5.2%	8
The OU in the North, Gateshead	3.2%	5
The OU in Wales, Cardiff	4.5%	7
The OU in Scotland, Edinburgh	9.0%	14
The OU in Ireland, Belfast	1.3%	2
I am a designated homemaker, so based at home	9.0%	14
Open University warehouse, Wellingborough	0.0%	0
	<i>answered question</i>	<b>155</b>
	<i>skipped question</i>	<b>0</b>

Question 2. Most (136) of the 155 responses came from faculties and Academic Services. In addition to this a few respondents identified themselves as working in more than one unit or working in a unit while also serving as an AL.

Academic Services	24
FASS	40
STEM	34
WELS	32
FBL	6

Question 3 asked for ‘department’. This produced a wide range of answers including regional locations, schools and academic disciplines. It is therefore impossible to identify trends below faculty/unit level.

Question 4 asked for staff category. There were 28 ALs, 25 Central Academics, 14 Central Academic, 49 Region/Nation Academics and 24 Region/Nation Academic-Related. No full-time researchers answered the survey. Eleven respondents stated they were ‘other’, including 5 members of clerical and administrative staff.

What is your staff category?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
AL	18.5%	28
Central Academic	16.6%	25
Central Academic Related	9.3%	14
Region / Nation Academic	32.5%	49
Region / Nation Academic Related	15.9%	24
Researcher	0.0%	0
Other (please state below)	7.3%	11
Comments		21
<i>answered question</i>		<b>151</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>4</b>

## Qualitative Data

Question 5 was an open question: 'How does GTP impact on your work?'

There were 145 responses to this. There were no positive responses. Of those who answered, the vast majority identified a significant personal workload impact. A particular issue raised was that addressing GTP without adequate administrative support meant that staff tutor roles had become clerical roles.

Here are some selected responses that give a flavour of the issues raised from central and regional/national staff:

"It has made it impossible to do anything other than cluster manage for over 3 months. It has turned my working patterns upside down and I spend all my time firefighting and trying to convince ALs to work within the new system and not resign! I have had to work on Sundays and have worked to deadlines and according to rules that were then revealed to be completely bogus and superficial"

"It has started to take away my good working relationships with the regional ALs I act as a line-manager for"

"Significant and unachievable increase in workload"

"My workload has increased enormously. We have fewer staff to do more work using systems which repeatedly malfunction"

"I field calls from students that range from disgruntled to apoplectic"

"Workload increased significantly [and] pressure received from Associate Deans [and] Regional Managers. Also significant number of complaints received by Associate Lecturers. Sickness has gone up. Motivation is low"

"Constantly [affected]—no day goes by when I don't have to sort out issues relating to GTP"

"I worked an extra 160 hours (inc weekends and 12 hr days) to deliver 16J TSA/GT—no payment incurred as my grade does not attract paid overtime"

"As a Curriculum Manager I've had to respond to a lot of frustrated student and tutor queries at a very sensitive time. Because I hadn't been properly

briefed I wasn't aware of where or who the queries needed to go to for resolution. It has also becoming apparent via messages that Curriculum Managers will now be responsible for uploaded information about Learning Events onto system however we haven't been formally told or briefed about picking up this additional work by our management.”

AL respondents also noted the following:

“It has caused me to have to construct 5 new online tutorials. ...[T]here has been an imposition of the topics to be taught in tutorials. Previously constructed online tutorial material could not be used....”

“Due to the size of clusters, as an AL who has successfully combined OU tutoring with a day job, I had to apply for a leave of absence this year as I could not fit the travel to tutorial location with my day job commute. I will return if the structure changes next year, otherwise will have to resign permanently from the OU with great regret.”

“Appalling lack of communication. Students [were] not aware of tutorials, students do not understand the concept of cluster and want their own tutor – students walked out of my tutorials because they wanted to see the person who marked their work. Venue changed two days before teaching session...[students] arrived late and angry at my session.”

Question 6 was an open question: ‘Do you feel your department/unit was adequately consulted about the impact that GTP would have?’

In addressing this question, respondents made it clear that they drew a distinction between being informed about a policy, and being consulted in a meaningful way. Many respondents said they had not been consulted. Some said they had been part of discussions but either the implications hadn’t been understood, or concerns they raised had been ignored. There were 146 responses.

“We were adequately consulted, but not listened to. My impression was that those implementing the project thought along the lines ‘Staff Tutors are moaning but they always do. They will make it work somehow.’ They really didn’t listen to the facts we were relaying which meant that it couldn’t be made to work.”

Question 7 asked “Were you given adequate training on GTP before it was implemented?” There were 143 responses. Those surveyed gave a wide range of answers to this. It was clear that many caught up in GTP had not received any training of any kind. Others commented on poor or inadequate training. A few noted that training would not have prevented some of the issues they encountered.

“Some training on principles (but the principles were flawed and ill-conceived). None on systems.”

“I did have some GTP training. But it was training given by personnel who also had a rather fuzzy grasp of what should happen and when. I felt sorry for them. People saying ‘My understanding is...’, ‘As far as I know...’ All very embarrassing for the trainers, and very worrying for the trainees!”

“No. For example, our ‘training’ for entering venues and booking rooms on the LEM system was a lync call a few days before the system was made ready to do this process, which was in the middle of one of the busiest weeks of TSA. All of this should have been in place months before.”

“We were given no training. Module Chairs and CMs [curriculum managers] were required to complete a detailed spreadsheet (LEM) for each module. However, we were never made aware of the defaults and assumptions that underpin various items within the spreadsheet...”

“No, there was no trouble shooting team to deal with the huge amount of complaints. No one put themselves forward to be held accountable.”

“No – the training consisted of instructions which were confusing or problematic and often later invalidated. I also think the topdown ‘training’ notion is very problematic when trying to change pedagogical approaches and build teams amongst colleagues who are more experienced at tutoring, teaching and learning than the ‘trainers’ were. The training needed to be reconceptualised to work along the lines of module team in production—e.g. in a joint way that drew upon the existing expertise...”

## Workload Issues

Question 8 asked if respondents had done overtime or unusual hours because of GTP.

Did you have to work extra or unusual hours to solve problems caused by the GTP implementation? [If no, go to Q15]		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Extra hours only	26.8%	38
Unusual hours only	4.9%	7
Both extra and unusual hours	52.8%	75
Neither extra nor extended hours	15.5%	22
Comments		80
<i>answered question</i>		<b>142</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>13</b>

Of the 80 who commented, many central/regional/national staff noted really exceptional workloads. A few said they took this on voluntarily while many others felt it was impossible to avoid. There was evidence that some units were less supportive than others in allowing staff flexibility. Some staff were not able to take any summer annual leave because of the problems. Many staff reported that dealing with GTP left them unable to deal with other areas of work.

“I worked evenings, Sundays and Saturdays. We are all owed huge amounts of TOIL but cannot take it because everything is still in chaos.”

“Worked extremely long hours for weeks and weeks. I’m aware I was not alone but I don’t think there is a realization about the scale of additional work undertaken.”

“...[A]lthough my contract is .5 FTE, it was impossible to be part-time from July to September.”

“I’m part time but it was assumed that I would be able to troubleshoot problems every day...”

“Extra hours required—including working on three days of annual leave in July to complete tutorial spreadsheets (faculty required these to be completed by 31<sup>st</sup> July, but was not allowed to carry over annual leave so had to take then!!)”

“I think the defining moment for me came when I couldn’t put my 3year old daughter to bed as usual at 7pm because I was awaiting to conduct an OU Live session to angry and baying tutors who really just needed someone to shout at...”

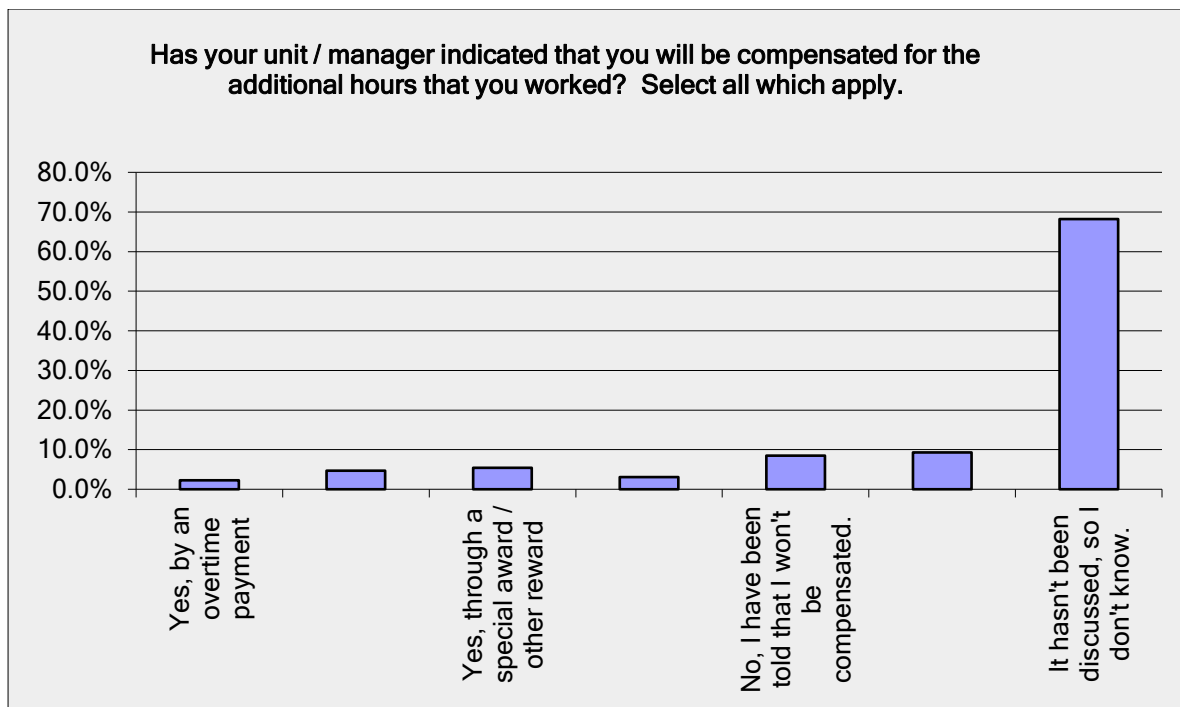
“I was unable to go on holiday due to total chaos on the module websites, timetables incomplete and furious students and ALs.”

Question 9 asked about specific extra duties. Because of the range of staff who answered, it was not possible to identify clear patterns. Themes included increased correspondence with ALs over availability; answering tutor and student queries; dealing with tutor and student complaints (which carried high attendant stress); and checking/re-checking the LEM.

In this high-pressure situation, not only were different systems displaying different information, but there was also considerable university communication that had to be read and referred to in relation to the unfolding issues. One respondent remarked on having to rewrite such communication so that it made sense to front-line staff.

Question 10 asked respondents to quantify the extra time spent. In answering respondents used a wide variety of measures, including hours, days and weeks. The answers ranged from 0 hours in a few cases up to roughly 160 hours. Time was obviously directly related to role and duties. As previously noted some part-time staff worked full-time for a period (depending on unit some of these staff were not compensated for their time). Some full-time staff reported working every weekend for a month or more (for example, in October).

Following on from this, Question 11 asked if staff were compensated for their extra time. There were 129 responses and 88 people said nothing had been discussed at the time of the survey (which closed 28 November).



The comments suggested there is variation according to unit and line manager in normal approach to the staff rewards system, which staff expected to carry over into this situation. Some noted that personal compensation was less important to them than adequate assurance this situation could not arise again. “I don't particularly want to be compensated - I don't want to profit from this debacle; instead, I want it to be fixed and never repeated.” Others pointed to problems in communication and leadership: “We have had no leadership from our senior managers. [T]hey have adopted a military chain of command approach speaking only to the next tier below them, thus avoiding direct contact with Staff Tutors. Dysfunctional is a kind way of putting it.” Several central academics noted that the impact on them did not appear to be visible to senior managers.

Question 12 asked if respondents feel what they’ve been offered (or expect to be offered) in compensation is adequate. Four respondents said ‘Yes’, 55 said ‘No’ and 56 were ‘Not Sure’. As noted above many had no idea if any compensation was on offer.

Many of those who answered were not concerned with compensation as such, feeling either that it was irrelevant given that issues were ongoing, or that financial recognition would not be adequate to the situation.

“Even if compensation is given, it can’t cover the mayhem”



“TSA would not have happened without everyone working 'over and above' both their grade and the hours they should work.”

“One of the worst things in all this is seeing ALs who are actually grateful for the sum of £200, which doesn't represent anything near the amount of work they have done.”

“Not really - but it's not the money as such, it's the stress and embarrassment the fiasco has caused.”

“Any 'reward' for additional work does not take into account the enormous stress and related health problems that this has caused.”

“The worst thing is that I feel we have lost the trust of ALs, and that we may never regain it. The OU depends on the goodwill of ALs who do a tremendous job, and I feel that nothing can compensate for that being lost (I am a former AL myself so understand their position).”

“I'm not interested in compensation. I just want OU senior managers to actually understand what the issues are and address them”

Question 13 asks if normal work has been impacted by GTP. Of those answering the survey, 121 said 'Yes', 8 said 'No' and 6 were 'Not Sure'. There were 90 comments. A key theme was that for staff tutors, module writing and other academic work had suffered as everything else was put on hold to deal with GTP. This had an effect on other deadlines. It was reported that queries and problems continue on top of the 'business as usual' work and this continues to eat into time available for other important business. Some staff tutors repeated that their role has changed to being almost entirely administrative in nature.

“Not meeting module team presentation dead[l]ines; significant delays in interviewing schedule and outcomes for AL vacancies; not attending Faculty & School meetings in order to catch-up; not taking annual leave in August & September.”

“We're constantly being distracted by GTP problems, and it shows no sign of abating. Study leave has been hit, as have other tasks. There is no time to

think straight - we just lurch from emergency to emergency, punctuated by tears.”

“I am so behind on other work because of GTP and the other associated changes.”

Question 14 asked if extra help had been requested, and if so, if this help materialized. The answers again proved variable and appeared to depend on unit and line manager. In some cases help was offered in the form of DL days for Associate Lecturers but it was offered late, or staff felt this was not really usable resource. It was noted that temporary staff require training for which there was no time during an emergency situation. It was again stated that Faculty Assistant support had been withdrawn at a time when their help was needed.

Has extra staff / resource been provided to help with either the GTP work or your 'normal' work, as a result of the GTP implementation problems?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes, it was offered and provided	27.9%	34
Yes, I requested it and it was provided	9.0%	11
No, it has been promised but not provided yet	6.6%	8
No, it has been requested but turned down	4.1%	5
No, it has not been requested or provided	52.5%	64
Comments		68
	<i>answered question</i>	<b>122</b>
	<i>skipped question</i>	<b>33</b>

“It's not useful. DL days for ALs to come in means we have to train them - which takes up more time. Also, we are moving to home working so DL are less and less useful. We need more staff.”

“...Faculty Assistant support was withdrawn at a time when most needed.”

“Additional resource was offered for filling in spreadsheets - but this is not what was needed. The correct remedy is a working system that does not require lots of extra resource to make it work.”

“We were offered a few DL days between 20+ staff tutors but it came far too late in the day (just before the timetabling deadline) and so most of the work was already done. No I have not have any help with my 'normal' work.”

Question 15: are you aware of colleagues who have had to work long or unsociable hours because of GTP?

This was presented as an open question. Only 5 respondents answered 'No' out of 145. One person pointed out that this extra work was highly visible: "Yes, every single one of my colleagues in FASS has had to do so. It's evident because we can see who is online via Lync. Many of us have been online in the eve[n]ings and weekends."

"Yes - the AL Services team in the regional centre have worked flat out since mid September. For some this has included evening and weekend overtime, missing breaks, working through lunch. They have been visibly stressed at times. At least one person has taken some time off sick. I have heard of others being in tears. Many of them are at G4 level and have been put under significant pressure which does not correspond with their salary."

Question 16 asked: Is there any other information you feel we should have to help with the negotiations on GTP?

Again there was a wide range of answers. Some respondents again took issue with the principles behind GTP while others focused on poor IT and the lack of a sufficient piloting exercise. There was a concern raised by a number of respondents that the university was losing its reputation for high-quality education and support, and that the same problems could easily arise again especially given the loss of experienced regional staff.

"Some staff are now being made ill by overwork. I myself have been losing sleep, waking up with headaches, becoming on occasion grumpy and irritable. Am aware of others with similar problems."

"I think the impact on the nature of the staff tutor role and therefore job description is very significant and this has been imposed with no negotiation at a time of AL services realignment and removal of our located faculty assistant support"

"This isn't just about completing spreadsheets, or IT system not working, it is about the institution not realising what its strengths are and why it has the reputation it does for quality teaching. It seems happy to throw away much of what was good about its interactions with students and reduce the flexibility ALs had to react to student needs as and when required."

“I am very concerned about the impact on retention (on both students and staff) but we will not see that until 12 months time.”

“This entire shambles (although not the massive scale of it) was predicted from outset by staff tutors, faculty teams, and those ALs who were made aware of what was being proposed (although ALs were not properly consulted - we were told what was happening). We were completely ignored. This situation simply cannot be allowed to happen again... The failure of the OU powers that be to consult with, listen to, or to show any respect for ALs is utterly baffling. This perhaps isn't answering your question - but the main information I think you should have is that ALs need to be listened to!”

“I would also add that much more recognition and understanding of the particular contexts of the different countries in the British Isles is required. GTP cannot work on an OU-wide basis. Scotland, for instance, and perhaps Ireland, require their own distinctive GTP which reflects the particular student bodies in those countries.”

(Question 17 was for the internal use of UCU only. It asked respondents to identify whether or not they were members of UCU or another trade union.)

Conclusions
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In establishing three reviews to reflect on GTP and its implementation, the university recognised that this was an area of very significant failure.

These survey results obviously bear out that view and provide detail about the individual and collective staff experience of that failure. They confirm that the effects of GTP were considerable and ongoing; that staff invested an enormous amount of unpaid and “personal” time in attempting to mitigate the effects for students and colleagues; and that for many months there has been a massive diversion from other important work. In addition the timing of the implementation and what many respondents regarded as a poor approach to ‘training’ in the new systems and methods contributed dramatically to the difficulties.

The responses also demonstrate that while there were examples of excellent line management, in general the university did not have workable systems in place for non-ALs for recognising, preventing or rewarding excessive overtime or time above contract within this crisis situation.

There is a fundamental problem of fairness in leaving this to units and the goodwill of individuals (as UCU has previously pointed out) given two issues. The first is that many part-time staff already feel precarious (for instance if on fixed-term contracts) and will be unlikely to complain in case this jeopardizes relationships or future offers of work. The second is that the normal operation of the university's annual reward system, which applies to non-AL staff, is apparently wildly uneven across units even during normal years.

Many respondents said that compensation did not matter as much as being assured this situation would not arise again. (Some of the AL respondents were grateful for the £200 fee, while others said it was insignificant in relation to workload.) However, given that the reward system was used in some units it should have been used for all, and any compensation or awards should have been distributed fairly in an equitable and transparent manner.

Also (as UCU has previously pointed out) given the nature and extent of the GTP problems it is unreasonable that GTP awards are to be made from the standard annual budget, diverting this funding from others who also made outstanding contributions for areas that did not relate to GTP. This was an exceptional circumstance and the university should invest appropriately in compensating those staff who were affected.

Many comments also reflect the problems of a short-term staffing approach, through which additional capacity is provided by temporary contract staff (normally ALs doing 'Day Lecturer' days via consultancy contracts). There is no time for training consultants during a crisis. Furthermore it was noted repeatedly in the comments that some of the key administrative support in the regions/nations had been removed just before GTP and that this has not been replaced. This leaves a significant gap in resourcing that at present is filled by academics who are doing clerical and administrative work; this is neither effective nor efficient and highlights a need for dedicated, professional services staff to complete the administrative functions of GTP. GTP showed conclusively that the university needs experienced administrative staff in place. The responses here bear out the common sense view that a stable and

experienced staffing base is even more necessary in times of significant change.

An additional point confirmed by the survey is the frustration of staff with failure of meaningful consultation. Respondents noted that managers sometimes confused 'informing' staff with 'consulting' them. Consultation did not take place in way that allowed staff to feel they were influencing either the key decisions or the planning. There was also a sense that objections to specific changes or courses of action were misunderstood as expressions of a negative attitude - rather than informed concerns based in experience, and predicated on care for students. There was particular anger that nation-specific needs and circumstances were not considered.

The survey did not specifically ask about the principles of GTP, only the implementation. There was a range of views represented and some respondents felt that the principles were (in their view) impossible to implement without damage to the tutor-student relationship. In addition to criticising the management of GTP, therefore, some of the responses indicated a fundamental lack of faith in the university's current decision-making structures.