Academic Staff Handbook
Foreword

Welcome to the University of Sunderland.

We are an innovative, forward-thinking university with high standards of teaching, research and support. Now a global business with a presence in around 15 countries worldwide, around 40% of our annual turnover is derived from our international business.

Our two Sunderland campuses and our London campus are perfectly placed to ensure a life-changing student experience.

Our staff culture, our business systems and our operations have changed – and are still changing – to reflect the differing nature of our operation.

However, what has remained constant throughout are our vision and values, a determining factor in our success.

We recognise that our people are helping to drive the business and our success – they are our most important asset and resource. Our academic staff are dedicated, loyal and exceptionally capable. We are proud to work together with staff and stakeholders in joint pursuit of our vision, purpose and values. Excellence Through Our People, the University’s people strategy, reinforces this.

This handbook is intended as a general and informative guide for all members of academic staff and will be of particular use to new academic staff joining the University in understanding our expectations of the professional role of an academic at the University. The handbook will also provide you with important information on key aspects of your role, responsibilities, working arrangements and the wide range of support available to you during your academic career with the University.

Shirley Atkinson
Interim Vice-Chancellor & Chief Executive
Introduction

This handbook has been developed to assist you in understanding what working as an academic at the University of Sunderland means, and aims to clarify our expectations of the professional role of an academic. It also sets this into context by providing you with information on relevant processes, policies and procedures.

The handbook has been prepared in consultation and partnership with the University’s recognised academic staff union, the Universities and Colleges Union (UCU) and is updated on a regular basis.

Scope

The handbook covers full-time and part-time academic staff at the Lecturer, Senior Lecturer and Principal Lecturer grades within the University. It contains the main provisions outlined in the 1992 national agreement and incorporates both locally and nationally negotiated collective agreements which have subsequently varied the contract.

It contains both contractual and non-contractual elements. Where such policies and procedures are contractual, this is specified within the Statement of Particulars (Contract of Employment).

There are separate handbooks available for Academic Tutors (hourly paid and salaried), research and support staff at Sunderland, and for staff employed by the University of Sunderland London Campus.

Working at the University

As well as offering ‘life-changing’ opportunities to a diverse student body, the University is also one of the city’s largest employers and offers a huge range of exciting, challenging and rewarding opportunities in a variety of careers. These include academic, research, professional support and senior management roles to name but a few, all of which contribute to the success of the University.

The University and its subsidiary companies currently employ approximately 1,500 members of staff, across four Faculties and six support Services located on two campuses in Sunderland and one in London.

A copy of the University’s organisation chart can be found at:
www.sunderland.ac.uk/orgchart

We know that our people - both students and staff - are our greatest asset, and that is why we place such importance on them.
Our Vision, Purpose and Values

Our 2013/14-2015/16 Corporate Plan drives our vision:

“To be recognised as one of a new generation of great civic universities – innovative, accessible, inspirational and outward looking; with global influence and remarkable local impact.”

Our Corporate Plan outlines our key strategic themes which capture the University’s range of activity and what we aim to deliver. Each strategic theme and emerging objectives are underpinned by operational plans which are embedded into our planning framework and monitored by the University’s statutory committees.

Our shared values help frame our organisational culture and provide a sense of purpose to everything we do:

- **Academic excellence**
  To deliver a technology enabled, content rich and research-informed environment for students, as well as building on our strong academic standing through the creation, dissemination and application of knowledge to the highest quality standards.

- **Customer focus**
  Placing the needs of our students at the heart of everything we do, by providing an experience and environment that is challenging and rewarding, equipping them to be purposeful citizens and professionals in their chosen careers.

- **Global engagement**
  To make a difference in the global stage, educationally, economically and culturally, through engagement with a range of stakeholders, including students, partners, business, governments and the wider societies.

- **Working in partnership**
  To work closely with a range of partners, to support each other and help achieve mutually agreed objectives.

- **Influence and impact**
  To lead by example and deliver meaningful and beneficial outcomes for students, staff, partners and society as a whole.

- **Sustainability**
  To develop sustainable business practices that will support the needs of the organisation and its stakeholders, while ensuring minimal environmental impact.
5 University Professional Standards and Expectations
The University aims to encourage and support you in achieving and maintaining the highest professional standards in carrying out your duties and responsibilities. As a valued member of academic staff, you are expected to:

- place high quality provision, student needs and business success at the heart of all we do
- value collaboration, engagement and communications
- take pride in being part of the University and live our values in your daily activities
- understand how you and your team contribute to what we want to achieve
- perform your role to the highest possible standards, taking ownership and accepting the responsibilities this brings
- understand the need to continuously develop skills and knowledge and make best use of opportunities to learn and develop
- get involved, be open to new ways of working and offer ideas for continuous improvement
- display a ‘can do’ attitude, be a team player, open to the perspectives of others
- contribute to a positive culture even when change brings turbulence
- support the values and principles outlined in the Academic Strategy and underpinning Learning and Teaching Plan and Research Plan
- be a Fellow, Senior Fellow or Principal Fellow of the Higher Education Academy
- promote equality, diversity and ethical behaviour in all activities
- maintain positive and appropriate relationships with colleagues, students and the wider University community
- follow Codes of Practice relating to research and carrying out of external work.

6 Your Academic Role
Our Academic Strategy provides a framework for the development of all academic and related activity to provide our learners with the best possible student experience. Through the strategy’s aims and objectives, we seek to characterise our University in such a way that this strategy is truly owned by all of our staff. We aim to provide opportunities to support career progression within the University through our recruitment and selection processes. We also support and encourage career progression through our internal promotions scheme to senior academic positions (Reader, Principal Lecturer (Learning & Teaching) and Professor).
Your workload is captured in relation to key areas of activity as follows:

**Formal Scheduled Teaching (widely referred to as ‘Category 1’)**
This is a key part of your role and will include the following activities, whether delivered on campus or off-site as part of a collaborative partnership arrangement:
- Lectures, seminars, academic tutorials (including placement tutorials), timetable laboratory and clinical work and task based student activity undertaken during normal teaching sessions which form the planned delivery of modules;
- Supervision meetings (individual and group) with project, dissertation and research students.
You may normally expect to have formal scheduled teaching responsibilities for students within a band of 14 to 18 hours a week on average over the anticipated teaching year.
Formal scheduled teaching responsibilities should not normally exceed 18 hours in any week and a total of 550 hours should not normally be exceeded in the teaching year.

**Teaching Delivery Related Activity (widely referred to as ‘Category 2’)**
This includes work directly related to the delivery of formal scheduled teaching, such as *(note the list is indicative but not exhaustive)*:
- Preparation and assessment;
- Invigilation;
- On-going development of teaching method and general updating of teaching materials;
- Personal subject updating related to teaching duties;
- General administration related to the teaching duties;
- Academic advice and guidance.
For every hour of direct teaching, supervision meetings with project and dissertation students, and PhD supervision meetings it is considered good practice to allow an hour for teaching delivery related activity. Therefore, in the majority of cases there will be a Category 2 hour for every Category 1 hour, however, in exceptional circumstances, the Faculty will have scope to vary the 1:1 ratio.

**Other Academic Activities (widely referred to as ‘Category 3’)**
- **Academic Leadership, Management and Administration**
  This element covers work associated with the leadership, management and administration of academic activity and personal tutor work with students.
- **Research and Scholarly Activity (RSA)**
  RSA is paid work time which individuals are allocated to undertake research and scholarly activity to develop them in their role within the University, in line with their academic subject area.
- **Research**
  It may be considered appropriate to allocate time to research over and above RSA time, which will be recorded as a separate allocation.
- **External Engagement**
  Time spent engaging with, developing relationships with, and working together on collaborative projects and activity with, external organisations (private, public, and third sector). Examples include the development of knowledge transfer opportunities and projects (e.g. Knowledge Transfer Partnerships, regional and national programmes for University-business collaboration, Continuous Professional Development (CPD) and professional training, and new developments around the student experience such as projects and internships). This would also include time spent on funding development for these activities.
- **Professional Contract Time**
  The profile of the academic contract recognises that an allocation of 37 hours per week for workload purposes will include an element of ‘professional contract time’. Professional contract time includes those aspects of the role that cannot be pre-determined but are considered to be an important element of the academic role, such as professional discussion and dialogue with academic colleagues. Professional contract time is allocated at 76 hours per individual (38 weeks x 2 hours per week).

Further details on Your Academic Role, Determining Your Workload, Your Working Hours and The Teaching Year can be found in the Framework for Academic Workloading:
www.sunderland.ac.uk/workloading
Determining Your Workload

The University’s Framework for Academic Workloading provides a structure and a series of clear principles to enable an equitable, transparent and consistent approach to the allocation and management of academic staff workloads within Faculties and across the University.

Some of the key principles that are used in determining workload allocations, include:

i. The workloading process is aligned to the University’s annual planning cycle and should be supported by the Review and Development Framework and appraisal discussions with academic staff.

ii. Academic and academic-related staff are professionals who are expected to be flexible in their approach to their workload and will engage in a range of activities which can include the following (note the list is indicative but not exhaustive):
   - Formal scheduled teaching (including where students are off campus);
   - Preparation and assessment;
   - Student recruitment and/or marketing activity;
   - Academic leadership and management;
   - Research;
   - Scholarly Activity;
   - External engagement activities;
   - Teaching related administration;
   - Personal and professional development activity;
   - Student supervision (Dissertations, Projects, Placements, Internships and Teaching Practice).

iii. It is essential that Faculties maintain an ongoing review of workloads so as to adjust to changing or unexpected circumstances. This commitment to flexibility by staff and the Faculty is a key component of the workloading process as it ensures that the needs of students, staff and external clients can be met as circumstances change during the year. Changes to workloads will be made following discussion and agreement with the individual.

iv. The University is committed to ensuring that, where reasonably practicable, individual workloads are balanced throughout the academic year.

Further details on Your Academic Role, Determining Your Workload, Your Working Hours and The Teaching Year can be found in the Framework for Academic Workloading.

Your Working Hours

You are employed under a professional contract and, therefore, expected to work such hours as are reasonably necessary in order to fulfil your duties and responsibilities. The full-time equivalent of 37 hours per week is used for nominal purposes therefore, is considered to be a reasonable norm for full-time staff. This may be worked flexibly to keep the average hours within reasonable limits.

Academic staff may be required to deliver classes on up to two evenings each week. Compensatory time off in lieu may be taken at a time to be agreed with the Team Leader.

In order to support the continued success of the University there may be occasion to ask academic staff to work at the weekend (e.g. open days). If you agree to work on a weekend this will be within your agreed workload and time off in lieu will be taken at a time agreed with your Team Leader. Your Team Leader will provide as much notice as possible and will take into account work-life balance and personal commitments. Academic staff and Team Leaders should take a reasonable approach to these requests.

Further details on Your Academic Role, Determining Your Workload, Your Working Hours and The Teaching Year can be found in the Framework for Academic Workloading.
9 Your Teaching Year
Your teaching year (which may be different weeks of the year for different individuals) should not normally exceed more than 38 weeks, of which 2 weeks will be spent on teaching-related administration. Whilst some flexibility may be required in organising the teaching year, you will not (except with prior agreement) be required to undertake more than 14 consecutive weeks of teaching at any one time.

Further details on Your Academic Role, Determining Your Workload, Your Working Hours and The Teaching Year can be found in the Framework for Academic Workloading.

10 External Work
The University has a Code of Practice on External Work (‘Policy and Code of Practice on Work for External Clients and Bodies’) which aims to support staff in carrying out external professional work and outlines the appropriate process to be followed.

A copy of the University’s Code of Practice on External Work can be found at: www.sunderland.ac.uk/externalwork

11 Pay and Grading Structure
The University’s current pay and grading structure can be found at: www.sunderland.ac.uk/payscales

The University recognises the efforts and commitment of its staff by seeking to offer a rewarding package of pay and benefits, which currently includes annual salary increments (to the maximum of the grade), nationally negotiated pay awards, a generous annual leave allowance and closure days and a defined benefit pension scheme. Further details can be found at: www.sunderland.ac.uk/hr

12 Review and Development Framework and Academic Staff Appraisal
The Review and Development Framework Guidance and staff appraisal are key to ensuring staff are supported to carry out their roles as effectively as possible. This is based on the understanding that professional updating, development and training is both a continuing and important activity that helps to maintain, enhance and recognise the performance of individuals, their department, the Faculty and the University. The purpose of the appraisal is to review progress and explore development needs and career aspirations of staff and to reflect Faculty and University aims and priorities.

All academic staff are expected to participate each year in an appraisal as a condition of their employment. The appraisal discussion links the make-up of duties and workload to agreed objectives, goals and development needs. The appraisal aims to:

- provide staff with the opportunity to review and discuss activity and to give and receive informed and constructive feedback on progress in their department, using a two way process;
- review achievements and outcomes against key goals for the past 12 months;
- clarify for staff, the University and Faculty priorities and to agree key objectives related to these;
- discuss staff development needs in relation to personal, Faculty and University objectives and agree how these development needs can be met within the resources available;
- discuss short and long term career aspirations in relation to current and potential future roles;
- allow agreement of focus and key goals for the year ahead;
- allow for identification and discussion of difficulties or obstacles to effectiveness;
- provide a way of balancing personal needs and ambitions with the University’s overall objectives.

www.sunderland.ac.uk/hrpolicies

13 Academic Staff Development
The University places significant importance on the continuing professional development of academic staff and provides a range of development activities to support teaching and learning and research activities and other aspects of academic practice.

Development activities include on-campus events and sessions for all staff who teach students and/or support student learning. Our Continuous Professional Development (CPD) programme is accredited by the Higher Education Academy (HEA) and participation can support a claim for Fellowship of the HEA by the CPD route.

Further information, advice and support can be provided by contacting Academic Development

http://my.sunderland.ac.uk/display/acadev/
Welcome+to+Academic+Development
14 Holidays, Sickness Absence and Work Life Balance

The University supports work-life balance and has a range of policies and procedures that provide authorised absences from work, including for annual leave, personal sickness, parental leave, maternity, adoption and paternity leave and career breaks.

The University also recognises that there may be occasions when staff need to take time away from work for reasons that do not necessarily fall under existing leave provisions. The University’s Special Leave Policy provides a framework to enable staff to take reasonable time off:

- to care for a child or make arrangements for a child’s welfare;
- to provide care and attention to a dependant;
- to deal with emergencies or unexpected events;
- to take compassionate leave;
- for public duties.

All staff are required to seek authorisation for any absences from work. Each Faculty should have a well defined local process for notification of sickness, notification of working off-site and for recording agreed annual leave. It will be important that you familiarise yourself with your Faculty’s local processes so as to follow those appropriately.

There is an annual entitlement to 36 days of annual leave in the leave year, which runs from 1 September to 31 August. The timing of holidays is subject to local approval (via Faculty arrangements) in advance of being taken. Subject to the organisational requirements of the University, up to 7 weeks may be taken in a single block and such a request will not be unreasonably refused. Additionally, currently, 8 Bank Holidays and 5 Christmas closure days apply.

For most staff, the student vacation periods at Easter and Christmas will not normally be used for formal scheduled teaching and therefore some vacation time (additional to University closure days) can be agreed to be taken as annual leave.

15 Business Travel

The University has a Business Travel Policy and Procedure which sets out the framework for arranging and booking business travel, both within the UK and overseas. The Policy also includes the process for claiming associated travel and subsistence expenses.

The University’s Business Travel Policy and Procedure can be found at: www.sunderland.ac.uk/businesstravel

16 Indemnification and Insurance

The University holds insurance policies in respect of Employers Liability, Third Party and Professional Indemnity. Subject to the specific provisions of the Policies these will provide cover against claims arising against employees in the course of or as a consequence of his/her employment.

The University also provides a Personal Accident Insurance Policy covering accidental bodily injury resulting in death or disablement to all employees which is suffered in the course of, or as a consequence of his or her employment.

For a copy of the Personal Accident Insurance Policy please contact Human Resources.
17 Your Health, Safety and Environmental Responsibilities

All employees have a legal responsibility under the Health and Safety at Work Act for the health and safety of themselves and for other persons who may be affected by their acts or omissions. They must co-operate with their employer whilst at work to ensure that all statutory requirements are correctly observed.

You will be required to comply with legislative obligations and support the University in the achievement and maintenance of a safe working environment. You will be provided with appropriate training to ensure you have the required competence to perform your duties safely and are aware of the precautions necessary to minimise risks.

The policies, standards and procedures adopted by the University are briefly described in the University’s Policy on Health, Safety and Environment. This is underpinned by the University’s Health, Safety and Environment Manual, which should be referred to when further detail is required.

Further details, including a full list of the contents of the Health, Safety and Environment Manual, is available on the University Health, Safety and Environment website:

www.sunderland.ac.uk/safety

18 Membership of a Trade Union

The University, as your employer, supports a system of collective bargaining and the principle of resolving industrial relations problems by discussion and agreement.

For practical purposes, this can only be conducted by representatives of the employers and of the employees. You are, therefore, encouraged to be a member of a recognised trade union.

The University recognises the Universities and Colleges Union (UCU) for negotiating purposes for academic staff.

The following arrangements have been established to enable consultation and negotiation to take place within the University, on a regular basis:

Consultation

Consultation is defined as a process by which management regularly seeks the views, ideas and feelings of staff before decisions are made. Consultation with staff through recognised staff representatives is seen as a major issue in the development and promotion of a good employee relations climate within the University.

- **Joint Consultative Committee (JCC)**
  Representatives of the recognised trade unions and representatives of management meet regularly to discuss key strategic issues that affect the whole University.
  The Joint Consultative Committee is the formal forum for:
  - presentation and consultation between management and recognised staff representatives on collective and strategic issues, policies and changes which affect significant numbers of staff;
  - sharing and discussing key initiatives and ideas and identifying opportunities for joint action with the aim of improving the overall staff and student experience.

- **University Consultative Committee on Safety, Health and Environment (UCCSHE)**
  The University’s Consultative Committee on Safety, Health and Environment is the formal forum for the development, management and implementation of health, safety and environmental policies, procedures and practices.

Negotiation

Negotiation is a discussion between two or more parties which is aimed at reaching mutual agreement. The procedure for negotiation within the University also recognises that joint national pay bargaining machinery exists for the Higher Education Sector.

- **Academic Staff Negotiating Panel (ASNP)**
  The Academic Staff Negotiating Panel is the main forum for negotiation with UCU on academic matters, for example, terms and conditions for academic staff.
  The Panel will be authorised to negotiate on local agreements within the national framework and, where necessary, on local interpretation and implementation of National Agreements.

- **Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC)**
  It is recognised that there may be occasions when there will be a need to negotiate with all recognised staff representatives simultaneously. Such special joint meetings, would take place in the forum of a Joint Negotiating Committee.

Further details of consultation and negotiation processes, including terms of reference, can be obtained from Human Resources.
The University recognises the importance of good employee relations. The University is a member of the University and Colleges Employers’ Association (UCEA) which was created to regulate, at national level, the relationships between the University and the signatory Union to the National Recognition and Procedure Agreement. The University will have regard to any recommendations made under this agreement.

The Agreement recognises that UCU and the University accept their joint responsibility for ensuring a well ordered system of Trade Union organisation and industrial relations and the contribution that can be made by UCU and its representatives to the smooth running of the University at all levels.

The Agreement outlines the time-off provisions and other facilities which will apply to ensure staff representatives are able to fulfil their obligations to represent their members in matters arising out of, or connected with, their employment by the University of Sunderland.

### Time off for Trade Union Duties and Activities

The nature of the duties of a lecturer are wide-ranging and in keeping with the professional nature of an academics contract. It is agreed that the teaching of students should not be affected and classes should not normally be cancelled or re-arranged in order to undertake Trade Union duties.

However, in recognition that paid time off is required to enable Branch Officers and representatives to undertake their trade union duties, the University will make available to UCU equivalent to 2 FTE of lecturing posts on a weekly basis. This time is to be allocated to the Branch Officers and staff representatives. The allocation to individuals is to be confirmed in writing to the Director of Human Resources.

It is accepted that the nature of academic work is such that it may be difficult to inform the Dean of Faculty in advance of any time taken on trade union duties by Branch Officers and representatives will inform the Faculty Office of any absence.

No meeting of groups of employees shall be held during normal working hours except with the prior permission of the Director of Human Resources in consultation with the line management. Permission will not be withheld where the meeting is to be held within the normal lunch period or in the evening.

- **Reasons Qualifying for Time Off**
  - The following is a list of duties and activities for which staff representatives and union officials will be granted time off with pay. It is recognised that this list is not exhaustive.

- **Union Duties**
  - These are matters relating to work within contracts of employment and/or conditions of services, such as:
    - joint consultation;
    - negotiation within Academic special interest groups;
    - disciplinary matters;
    - grievance matters;
    - employment tribunals and representation at other external bodies;
    - meetings with Management.
• **Union Activities**
Time off from work is not normally allowed for Trade Union activities, however, management will agree specific absences. Union activities are matters relating to external work concerned with the operation of the union, such as:
- attendance at National Conference;
- attendance at Regional Bodies;
- balloting;
- recruitment of members;
- attendance at local executive meetings
Where national meetings are directly concerned with national negotiations time off with pay will be granted. For all other activities reasonable time off (not necessarily with pay) will be given. Applications for leave must be made to the Director of Human Resources.

• **Industrial Action**
There is no right to time off for officers or members to participate in industrial action. Where an officer is not taking part in industrial action but represents members involved, normal arrangements for time off with pay for officers will apply, e.g. attendance at a meeting with staff who are on strike.

• **Training**
Training relevant to the industrial relations duties of staff representatives will be encouraged by management. Requests for paid time off for training will be made to the Director of Human Resources and should:
- give at least 2 weeks notice of nominations for training courses;
- provide details of the contents of the training course.

21 Associated Documents
- University Organisational Structure;
- Framework for Academic Workloading;
- Policy and Code of Practice for Work for External Clients & External Bodies;
- University Pay and Grading Structure;
- Business Travel Policy and Procedure;
- Special Leave Policy;
- HS&E Manual;
- HS&E Policy;
- Academic Strategy;
- Learning and Teaching Plan;
- Professorial and Readership Appointments Procedure;
- Recruitment and Selection Procedure;
- Review and Development Framework;
- Adoption Policy;
- Career Break Policy;
- Maternity Policy;
- Paternity Policy;
- Absence Management Policy;
- Sickness Reporting Procedure;
- University People Strategy ‘Excellence Through Our People’.

A full list of associated University staffing policies and procedures can be found at: [www.sunderland.ac.uk/hrpolicies](http://www.sunderland.ac.uk/hrpolicies)

This handbook can be obtained from the Human Resources website, Docushare or by contacting Human Resources.
[www.sunderland.ac.uk/hrcontacts](http://www.sunderland.ac.uk/hrcontacts)

If you would like this handbook in larger print please contact Human Resources.

Your comments or suggestions for matters that might be usefully included in subsequent editions of this handbook would be welcome. Please send any comments or suggestions to the Director of Human Resources andrea.walters@sunderland.ac.uk