



Check-in #10 COVID-19 Level 1

Excessive workloads are not 'the new normal'

**Awhi atu, awhi mai; make time
for whānau and friends.**

#WorkSleepPlay



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It's not easy to say no to requests from an employer to pick up more work, particularly during a global pandemic. All staff in our institutions have been working long hours to ensure students are well supported as we united against COVID-19.

But very high workloads are not normal and cannot continue.

We need to make time for whānau and keep our weekends free to walk, sing, play sport, read, watch movies, and be part of our communities. There is a danger, however that some institutional leaders and managers are looking at what we all did during the pandemic and saying, "Well of course you can just keep doing that".

So, whose job is it to ensure workloads are reasonable, equitable, safe and transparent?

- Governing bodies (e.g. university councils, institutional boards) as well all levels of management have a statutory responsibility to ensure your health and safety at work. We are working with your branch committees to send letters to chancellors and board chairs, as well as to senior management, highlighting our concerns about workloads as a risk to health and safety. We are asking to meet with governing bodies to make a presentation, based on our surveys of staff workloads and working conditions. The first of these meeting are beginning to occur now.

- Workplace health and safety representatives have a key role in our legislation and most institutions have committees of such representative meeting regularly. All decisions affecting health and safety of staff should be run past these committees. In the heat of the crisis these committees were largely side-lined. We are arguing that H&S reps must be included in all future decision making that affects staff well-being. You, as an employee, also have a legal responsibility to ensure your health and safety at work. The best way to do this is to step up and awahi those working around us, working with colleagues to seek limits to workloads. Check out our [flyer](#) on workloads to start the conversations with those working closest with you.

Under the cover of COVID-19

Tertiary level teaching and learning went rapidly online across Aotearoa New Zealand this year so that staff and ākonga could stay home and stay safe. The emergency remote teaching and support work was necessary as we united against COVID-19. But we must not let a small period of emergency response set the tone for the future of tertiary education.

Pushing as many functions of the tertiary education sector as possible online fits a long-standing managerial narrative about the need for tertiary education providers to quit their expensive campuses in favour of 'cost effective' online provision.

So, we need to be wary of some leaders in the sector – be they in our tertiary education institutions or in the government bodies responsible for the tertiary sector – using the cover of COVID-19 to change the world of teaching, learning, and student support forever.

We should take the good lessons from recent rapid online developments. But we then need to consider carefully whether they really are good long-term strategies.

- First, let us be clear about the role of staff in deciding on changes to established practice. We have the right and responsibility to decide on subject matter, assessments, teaching approaches, and research. That is because we have legislated academic freedom in relation to these matters.
- Added to this is the newly minted [NZIST Charter](#) which governs vocational education provision. This states that staff must be empowered on academic and wellbeing matters. Further, good practice dictates that those on the frontline – the academic and general/allied/professional staff who are with ākonga daily - are best placed to make decisions on how and what to teach.
- Any changes in practice that do look promising must first be piloted over a much longer timeframe than occurred during the emergency response period. A careful review must be then undertaken, with

further pilots if necessary, before we are able to say this is the 'new normal'.

- More broadly, staff need the opportunity to get together and analyse whether more online teaching and learning works for all ākonga and review the conditions for success and failure using this approach.

In summary, COVID-19 is not a reason to set down major changes to the way we teach and support ākonga. We did emergency remote teaching and support because it was an emergency.

Now let's get back to a serious conversation about how we will ensure accessible, quality teaching and learning in our public tertiary education institutions.

Tangihanga / Bereavement Leave

He iringa kawakawa, he rau mahara, he hotuhotu manawa, he roimata ka maringi ki a rātou i riro ki tua. Heoi, e kore te mahara e makere noa engari, ka noho i te whatumanawa. Moe mai rā koutou i te urunga tē taka, i te moenga tē whakaarahia, takoto, e moe, okioki.

Your wellbeing and the wellbeing of your whānau, colleagues, students, institution, community and iwi is paramount to support lifelong learning.

Whether you have experienced loss during L4-L1 or are feeling vulnerable, there is a growing need for manaakitanga to ensure our communities are well, not only in the good times but also in times of challenge – ngā piki, ngā heke.

COVID-19 has shown us that we need to talk and explore what leave provisions are available and how we are best able to take leave and what leave is available to us. If you need to take Tangihanga | Bereavement Leave please consult the [TEU's advisory](#) and speak to your organisers for assistance.

Sick Leave Petition

The New Zealand Council of Trade Unions (CTU) have also launched a [petition](#) that has identified the urgent need to review the legal provisions for paid sick leave. Please take the time to support this petition for workers who are less fortunate than most of our members whose collective agreements provide for much greater sick leave than the legal minimums.

**We are all in this together.
Tātou, Tātou e.**