

## **Oxford Brookes University Workload Planning Equality Training January 2019**

The Head of the Knitting Studies Department when preparing the WLP for academic year 2018-2020 had to consider the following cases:

Elisa has been employed as lecturer since April 2016 while she was undertaking doctoral studies. She successfully completed her PhD at the end of 2017. She had a plan to develop publications from her thesis, which was commended by the external examiner, but had to put this on hold because of maternity leave. She took one year maternity leave and has returned to work in January 2019. She has no publications and, given the time that it takes to publish an article, it is highly unlikely that she will be able to produce any in time for submission to REF 2021. Moreover, she will need to find a balance between her work and caring responsibilities and, since this is her first child, the Head of Department does not wish her to feel under pressure to publish.

Albert is a senior lecturer and has worked in the Knitting Studies department since 2012. Albert was returned to REF 2014 but since then he has produced only one publication because he has experienced a series of health difficulties, which have meant that he has been absent from work for a total of 14 months. He has returned to work in full health in January 2019. His publication however, is of the required quality for REF 2021 and it will be returned.

As resources are tight in the department the HoD decides to take a pragmatic approach and give Albert an allocation of 320 research hrs which represents a reduction from the 480 hrs that he would normally have received, based on his Research Plan. Elisa does not get any research hours since she has no publications at all.

Both Elisa and Albert are unhappy about these decisions and complain to the HoD. The HoD explains to Elisa that she had to make this decision because resources are tight. However, she reassures Elisa that she will be considered for some research hours the following academic year. She tells Albert that it would be unfair to other colleagues to give him more than 320hrs when he has only one publication.

### *Suggested Answer*

Both Elisa and Albert have equality-related personal circumstances as they had to take time off work because of maternity and illness respectively. Therefore, the HoD will need to take into account these equality considerations when preparing their WLP.

The guiding principle in this case must be promoting equal opportunities. If Elisa is not been given research hours until academic year 2019-2020 she would have spent well over a year with no time for research. This may put her at disadvantage as it could make it more difficult for her to re-start her research at a later stage and possibly jeopardise her chances of developing her research profile, being submitted to a future REF and ultimately being promoted to SL. Had it not been for the timing of maternity leave, Elisa would have probably been able to publish articles based on her PhD thesis.

Likewise if Albert had not experienced health problems he would have probably produced more research outputs as his track record suggests. Reducing Albert's research allowance may place him at disadvantage in terms of re-establishing his research productivity and this could undermine his chances of applying for promotion in future.

It is clear in both cases that equality-related personal circumstances have impacted on the ability of both Elisa and Albert to produce research outputs. These circumstances should be taken into account in their WLP to ensure a level playing field with other colleagues who did not have to take periods of leave from work. There is a risk otherwise that both careers may be negatively impacted.