Transparent Approach to Costing (TRAC)

Academic Time Allocation Schedule (TAS)

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b. Activity Codes for Research

	LEVEL 1 RESEARCH (R)			
Level 2		**Level 3**		
Code	**Sub Section**	**Code**	**Description**	
RGA	Research Council	**01**	Undertaking and managing research prior to writing of publishable output	
RGB	UK Charity	**02**	Scholarly work and advancement of personal knowledge and skills related to research but not directly linked to a specific project	
RGC	UK government & health Authority	**03**	Writing output for dissemination	
RGD	UK Industry	**04**	Supervision and training of research staff	
RGE	EU COMMISSION	**05**	Attendance at conferences, seminars and society meetings	
RGF	Other EU sponsors	**06**	Drafting grant proposals	
		07	Editing and refereeing activities for journals or conferences	
RGG	Other Overseas Sponsors	**08**	Editing and refereeing activities for funding bodies	
		09	Editing books and collections of essays	
RGH	Other Sources	**10**	Travel related to research activities	
		11	Knowledge Transfer Partnership activities & Technology transfer work	
RGX	NOT EXTERNALLY FUNDED	**12**	Internal Peer review of grant applications	

LEVEL 1 OTHER (O)			
Level 2		**Level 3**	
Code	Sub Section	Code	Description
INS	INSTITUTIONAL	01	Preparation for and attendance at University/College/School/Discipline Committees, not specific to either teaching or research
		02	General management duties, such as Deans, Assistant Deans, Heads of Admissions and so on
		03	Staff management, such as mentoring and appraisals
		04	Administration on behalf of the University/College/School/Discipline, not specific to either teaching or research
		05	Administration on behalf of the University/College/School/Discipline, specific to teaching
		06	Administration on behalf of the University/College/School/Discipline, specific to research e.g. Research Panels
		07	Consultancy (excl private), such as advisory work or the provision of a service on behalf of the University
		08	Services provided to the NHS under knock-for-knock arrangements by departments
		10	Travel not directly related to teaching or research
		11	Holiday
		12	Maternity/paternity leave
		13	Sickness/Compassionate leave
		14	Jury service
PRO	PROFESSIONAL	01	Maintenance and advancement of own professional knowledge and skills (reading literature, attending professional conferences, maintaining professional of clinical skills, acquiring new skills, etc.) not specifically related to teaching or research
		02	Staff development and training courses

N.B. Please note: entries for non-work activities are not required

Guidance Notes for Academic Time Allocation Schedule (TAS)

1. Background

1.1 TRAC is the methodology used by higher education institutions (HEIs) in the UK for costing their activities. HEFCE has supported the development and implementation of TRAC in HEIs since its inception and seeks to ensure that TRAC is fit for purpose in meeting institutions' and stakeholder needs.

1.2 In June 2010, a joint task group of Universities UK and the Research Councils UK, which was chaired by Sir William Wakeham, produced a report on full economic costing for research in higher education.

1.3 This report made a series of practical recommendations to funding bodies and universities and colleges. In particular, these recommendations looked at the financial sustainability and efficiency and effectiveness of the sector. The Wakeham review of fEC: Financial Sustainability and Efficiency in Full Economic Costing of Research in UK Higher Education Institutions requires research organisations to consider their cost base over the next three years with a view to more efficient practice.

2. General

2.1 Time allocation is a key driver of costs and, although like a number of institutions, the University of Aberdeen has historically collected time sheet data at a high level, we recognise that the data collection process could be greatly improved.

2.2 Each permanent core funded member of academic staff will be asked to complete a 24 hour 7 day week timesheet for **one week** of each academic year in 15 minute intervals. The purpose of the survey is to gain robust estimates of the time spent on Teaching, Research, and Other. Therefore only activities relating to University business should be recorded in the diary. You do not need to enter non-work time on the timesheet.

2.3 Please read the accompanying notes before you start the web diary. Please do not hesitate to contact us on trachelpdesk@abdn.ac.uk if you need further information or support. You should also consult the 'Frequently Asked Questions'.

2.4 The information is to be collected as 15 minute intervals in main categories Teaching (T), Research (R), Other (O), and then sub categorised. Where an activity benefits research as well as teaching, please try to apportion the relevant time between the different activities.

2.5 Through our TRAC Steering Group we have developed a three level coding structure to allocate activities between Teaching, Research and Other activities which meets the TRAC guidance requirements.

2.6 DIT has developed an electronic web based timesheet, which uses two worksheets to cover each day of the 7 day week collection period into 15 minute intervals, with drop down menus to assist in allocating to the relevant TRAC category.

2.7 Web based diary can be accessed from any computer with Internet connection. If for any reason you do not have access to such a machine alternatively, as the data collection period is only for one week, you can complete a paper copy of the timesheet and either use an alternative machine to input, or submit to your school administrator.

2.8 The data entered should represent the activity you have carried out in the week allocated. If you are on leave all week, for example, please allocate all your time to holiday. The data collected will be used at an aggregated level so we are looking for a representative sample across the whole group rather than at an individual level.

2.9 Data entered by an individual will not be available to the others. However, in order to provide some data validation, Heads of Schools will be asked to confirm the data entered by an individual are reasonable. DIT, finance staff and limited number of School Administrators will have access to the data to provide support. All Institutional and external use of the data will be aggregated and individuals will not be separately identifiable.

3. Activities

3.1 The activities are categorised in three levels. Each activity will fall into a category at each level for example, at level 1; the categories are Teaching/Research/Other. Teaching is then divided into level 2 categories; funded undergraduate, funded postgraduate taught, funded postgraduate research and non public funded teaching. For each of these, there is then a list of activities, such as presenting a lecture, preparing for a tutorial and so on. Delivery of a UK undergraduate lecture would be coded T UGF 01, please see below for further details.

Level 1: TEACHING (T)/ RESEARCH(R)/ OTHER (O)

a. TEACHING (T)

This activity includes all costs and activities that provide or support the teaching of under-graduate and post-graduate students.

Level 2 activity codes: UGF, PTF, PRF, NFU are explained below.

Teaching activities are split at level 2 between the following

Funded (Publicly funded Teaching) – activities that are generally considered to be fundable, at least in part, from public funds are split further between **level 2 codes**

- **Undergraduate (UGF),**
- **Postgraduate taught (PTF),**
- **Postgraduate Research (PRF)**

These would include: students on award and credit bearing courses; all teaching activity relating to ESF, Erasmus & Tempus; all levels of teaching, that is, sub-degree, degree; EU sponsored income. It should also include short courses commissioned by local authorities or other public funded bodies.

*Please do not apportion time where there are self-funded, sponsored and overseas students on UK courses as an adjustment will subsequently be made to transfer the cost of these students to Non-publicly Funded Teaching category for TRAC purposes using student load fTE.

Non Funded (NFU) (Non-publicly Funded Teaching) activity is generally considered to be funded wholly from non-public funds. This will include non credit-bearing courses; short courses & CPD activity for which fees are charged; teaching services delivered externally; courses held overseas; any commercial teaching wholly for external organisations such as Explohub with students funded by PEMEX, Schlumberger and other oil companies. It should not include short courses commissioned by local authorities or other public funded bodies.

Below this activities should be further divided into the following level 3 activities

01 **Delivery of lectures, seminars, tutorials and workshops**

02 **Delivery of laboratory practical and other laboratory teaching**

03 **Delivery of / participation in field work and project work**

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04   **Preparation for lectures, seminars, tutorials and workshops**

05   **Preparation for laboratory practical and other laboratory teaching**

06   **Preparation for fieldwork and project supervision**

07.   **Assessment, examining and invigilation** – this may include reading and assessing student dissertations, reading and marking essays, exam scripts, invigilation of examinations within the University. (Please note that External Examining is a separate category – 08.)

08.   **External Examining** – At other institutions.

09   **Teaching support incl Timetabling, Exam boards, preparation of prospectuses**

10.   **Travel related to teaching activities** – please see endnote related to travel (please note that travel category is assigned number 10 in each category).

11   **New course development** – which cannot be readily allocated to codes 04 - 06

12   **General reading and scholarship linked to teaching but not for a specific course**

13   **Writing text books or other publishable teaching materials**

14   **Schools liaison, admissions, general induction, interviewing, recruitment trips and preparation for these**

15.   **Advising, student welfare and other student support** -including counselling, pastoral support – outside timetabled tutorials.

16   **Supervision and support (including meeting student, reading drafts etc., developmental seminars)**

17.   **Activities relating to Quality Enhancement of Teaching** -including teaching related training, teaching conferences, such as Continuing Professional Development, advancement of knowledge and skills directly related to teaching.

b. RESEARCH (R)

Research activities include research and experimental development and should potentially lead to the production of outputs. Research can be a specific project and it may not have defined output or sponsor. This is further split at level 2 into funding body:

Level 2:

RGA   **Research Council - EXTERNALLY FUNDED**

RGB   **UK Charity - EXTERNALLY FUNDED**

RGC   **UK government & health Authority - EXTERNALLY FUNDED**

RGD   **UK Industry - EXTERNALLY FUNDED**

RGE   **EU COMMISSION - EXTERNALLY FUNDED**

RGF   **Other EU sponsors - EXTERNALLY FUNDED**

RGG   **Other Overseas Sponsors - EXTERNALLY FUNDED**

RGH   **Other Sources - EXTERNALLY FUNDED**

RGX   **If there is no external funder for the research and scholarship**, the activity is defined as institution-own-funded research (RGX).

Below this activities should be further divided into the following level 3 activities:

01. **Undertaking and managing research prior to writing publishable output** – undertaking basic, or applied research – to acquire new knowledge, or towards a specific practical aim, within this institution or in collaboration with other institutions, and management of research projects including informal discussions, progress reports and so on, and recruitment of research staff.

02. **Scholarly work and advancement of personal knowledge and skills related to research** – activities such as, keeping up-to-date with research literature, acquiring new technical skills, attendance at conferences (when not directly connected with a research project), block time in other research institutions on research exchange schemes.

03 **Writing output for dissemination**

04 **Supervision and training of research staff**

05. **Attendance at conferences. Seminars and society meetings** - that are directly connected with specific research projects

06. **Drafting grant proposals** - drafting and redrafting proposals for new work and supporting bids to external bodies.

07 **Editing and refereeing activities for journals or conferences**

08 **Editing and refereeing activities for funding bodies**

09 **Editing books and collections of essays**

10 **Travel related to research activities**

11 **Knowledge Transfer Partnership activities & Technology transfer work**

12 **Internal Peer review of grant applications**

c. OTHER (O)

Level 2:

Other Activities are further split between Institutional **(INS)** which are carried out for the Institution, and Professional **(PRO)** which are carried out for professional development purposes. Below this activities are further allocated to level 3 descriptions

Level 3 activities relating to Institutional (INS)

01 **Preparation for and attendance at University/College/School/Discipline Committees, not specific to either teaching or research**

02 **General management duties, such as Deans, Assistant Deans, Heads of Admissions and so on**

03 **Staff management, such as mentoring and appraisals**

04. **Administration on behalf of the University /College/ School/ Discipline, not specific to either teaching or research** - including publicity;

representative work, quality assurance contribution to sector, such as attending (unpaid) committees or secondments.

05.   **Administration on behalf of the University /College/ School/ Discipline, specific to Teaching -** including Quality assurance activities related to Teaching, such as QAA panels.

06.   **Administration on behalf of the University /College/ School/ Discipline, specific to Research** - including Quality Assurance activities related to Research, such as RAE panels.

07   **Consultancy (excl private)**, such as advisory work or the provision of a service on behalf of the University

08   **Services provided to the NHS** under knock-for-knock arrangements by departments

09   **Not used**

10   **Travel not directly related to teaching or research**

11.   **Holiday / Illness**– please include here the hours spend on holidays or absence due to illness (i.e. not long term).

12   **Maternity/paternity leave**

13.   **Sickness/ Compassionate leave** - apply only to long term leave

14   **Jury service**

Level 3 activities relating to Professional (PRO)

01   **Maintenance and advancement of own professional knowledge and skills** (reading literature, attending professional conferences, maintaining professional of clinical skills, acquiring new skills, etc.) not specifically related to teaching or research

02   **Staff development and training courses**

4. Additional Notes

Time spent on scholarship, travel, sabbaticals and conferences can be difficult to classify. Additional guidance is given below:

SCHOLARSHIP - this is defined for TRAC purposes as any activity which updates or maintains the skills and experience of the individual but is separate from Research, as it is acquisition of knowledge that exists elsewhere, not original research or work that moves the subject forward. Personal study or training which fulfils this definition should be included under the code O (for level 1 Other), PRO (for level 2 professional) and then either activity level 3 code 01 for Maintenance and advancement of own professional knowledge and skills or 02 Staff development and training courses as appropriate **= code O PRO 01 or O PRO 02.**

TRAVEL time should preferably be allocated in line with the purpose of the trip. If the trip is for work being carried out for a specific project or programme. For simplicity we have used the code 10 for the level 3 code in all cases, but please attribute to Teaching, Research or Other as appropriate.

SABBATICAL leave – carried out under research fellowship should generally be attributed to Research (unless the individual is still undertaking Teaching or Other activities) where there is no external funding body this will be generally coded to R (for level 1 research), RGX (for level 2not externally funded) 01 (for level 3 Undertaking and managing research prior to writing publishable output) = **code R RGX 01**

E-MAIL – e-mails should be allocated accordingly to the nature of their content i.e. if e-mail correspondence predominately relates to research, please code to research related category**.**

ADMINISTRATION DUTIES - Where the administrative activity is in support of the whole University, rather than your School, then it should be classed as Other (O) Institutional. This includes sitting on University committees, or work to promote the University as a whole.

CONFERENCE ATTENDANCE – this should be allocated according to the main reason for attending the conference. If you are presenting a research paper at a conference then it is classified as Research. See also guidelines for Travel.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is TAS?

TAS is short for Time Allocation Schedule data. This information is collected from individual staff members and used to calculate the proportions of time spent on different categories of work. The aggregate percentages of time recorded are used to allocate the staff costs to the different categories for the completion of the TRAC Return to the Funding Council.

2. Why is TAS important?

Staff costs are the single largest element of a University's costs. In order to be able to calculate the cost of certain activities we need to understand how staff spread their time over the range of University activities they carry out.

Information from TAS is used to allocate staff costs for TRAC to: Teaching (T), Research (R) and Other (O). TAS is also used as a driver to allocate other costs to these activities. TRAC data are then used to calculate: a) Indirect rates for Research projects and b) The costs for funding each Scottish Funding Council (SFC) Teaching Subject Group in TRAC (T). The SFC is planning to use the TRAC (T) data to inform future Units of Resource, so the funding we will receive for teaching students will be informed by TRAC (T) returns.

3. The data from the TAS exercise cannot possibly be 100% accurate. Does this matter?

The data are being collected in order to obtain, at School and University levels, a picture of how time is spent over a range of activities. We believe that much of detail of time spent on activities has been lost in previous approaches to data collection. The study seeks to capture this granularity and create a more accurate picture to inform our research and teaching costs. Of course, materiality should be borne in mind when completing the schedules since small percentage variations at an individual level will have limited impact at an aggregate level.

4. How will the information I provide through the TAS exercise be used?

It will be used solely for the purposes of financial planning. It will assist the Finance Office staff to allocate costs to a range of University activities (teaching, research, and so on).

5. I will be absent during my collection week. Can you change my week?

We cannot change survey weeks as they are allocated randomly to all individuals. We do realise that some individuals will be absent for the whole or part of their collection weeks for various reasons such as annual leave, university closure, sabbaticals, other reasons, but these are all classified as University activities. If you are going to be (or were) absent for the whole week and you think that the reason you are going to be (or were) absent is not covered (attendance at a conference is not classed as an absence), please contact the TRAC office on trachelpdesk@abdn.ac.uk to discuss the matter and establish whether a return is required.

6. The week I've been allocated doesn't represent my normal activities

The data will only be used at an aggregated level, so overall we hope to get a reasonable indication of University activity. Survey weeks are allocated at random to assist this. We realise that not all weeks are going to be typical working weeks for every individual but we are trying to capture a representative picture for the University as a whole for the entire year. It is a requirement of the Funding Council that any time allocation system be statistically robust (as well as a true representation of the activities of the University throughout the year).

The system we are piloting selects at random a small number of academics every week of the period covered, and all university activities should be recorded over the 7 day x 24 hour week allocated, in 15 minute slots.

7. I have made an incorrect entry can I change it?

Yes, if you make a mistake and want to clear a line – you just need to click in the first column and select the --Please Select-- line – this will reset the whole line. The web form will be open for a week after the end of your allotted week. Entries can be made at anytime during this period and only the last submission is used for analysis. If you realise that an incorrect entry has been made after the web form has closed, please contact the TRAC office on trachelpdesk@abdn.ac.uk and we will be happy to change the data for you.

8. Who sees my submission?

The Head of Schools sees all submissions within their School as each Head is asked to confirm that the data are reasonable. Other than that, the submissions are only seen at individual level by a small team that administrates the survey in Schools, DIT and Finance. All other use of the data is at an aggregated level and it will be impossible to identify any individual. There are no links to any other individual records on other University databases.

9. How should I allocate my time?

The guidance notes give a detailed breakdown and explanation of the categories, but if the answer to your question is not here, please contact TRAC office on trachelpdesk@abdn.ac.uk.

10. How do I know if I have to submit a TAS return?

All core funded permanent academic staff, who are on the university payroll, will be asked to submit a timesheet for one week of each financial year (August –July). The School Administrators have provided lists of the academic staff to be included and allocated a week for completion of the timesheet. An e mail providing details of the timesheet will be sent to all members of staff that are being asked to participate.

11. Who is my School TAS Co-ordinator and what is their role in this exercise?

Each School has an assigned TAS co-ordinator, who is responsible for ensuring that all concerns and queries are answered (through the TRAC office if necessary) and that all forms are returned to Research Financial Services within the set timescale. The School co-ordinators are;

College of Arts and Social Sciences

Business School	Nicki Duncan
School of Divinity History and Philosophy	Rachel Hughes
School of Education	Anne Shipley
School of Language and Literature	Maureen Wilkie
Law School	Sarah Duncan
School of Social Sciences	Pam Thomson

College of Physical Sciences

School of Natural and Computing Science	Sandra Edwards
School of Geosciences	Sheila McKay
School of Engineering	Joyce Clark

College of Life Sciences and Medicine

School of Medical Sciences	Lucy Meldrum
School of Medicine and Dentistry	Emily Swaine
School of Biological Sciences	Wendy Henderson
School of Psychology	Sandra Duffield
Rowett Institute of Nutrition and Health	TBC

12. I cannot log on to my form. What do I do?

TAS Diary is set only to let in users whose User ID is in the database. This does mean that if participant is using a machine at which someone else is logged on, he or she will not be able to enter the diary. Please make sure that you are entering the TAS Diary from a PC directly connected to Internet. If you continue to experience difficulties, please contact the TRAC office on trachelpdesk@abdn.ac.uk

13. I work off-campus and am unable to access the form externally. What should I do?

TAS Diary is web based application and the site can be access from any computer with Internet connection. If you are unable to use a computer, please contact your School co-ordinator who will arrange to send you a paper copy of the form which can then be input by them.

14. I've heard that I need to have ACCESS 2007 to participate, and I don't have it on my machine?

You don't need to have Access 2007 installed on your machine as DIT has developed web based version of the TAS Diary that is accessible from any computer with Internet connection.

15. I am a Mac user or do not have Office 2007 on my computer. Can I participate?

Yes, the web based version of the Diary can be accessed from any computer with internet connection regardless of make or operating system.