

Duty work by temporary staff at ISS

Survey results and discussion of recent changes in the *timeregnskap*
April 25th, 2022

Introduction

In February 2022 a survey about duty work was sent to all employees at Department of Sociology and Human Geography. The purpose of the survey was to get more knowledge about the duty work done by temporary staff. The department had specifically asked for more information about work related to seminar teaching. The survey went out to everyone, to collect information from the point of view of both course conveners and seminar teachers, permanent and temporary staff. Most questions were related to seminar teaching, as requested by the head of the department, but we also included some questions related to other kinds of duty work and more general experiences.

The survey got 46 responses. 27 of these were from permanent staff, 15 from PhDs, and 4 from postdocs. Permanent and temporary staff got different questions. The questions for permanent staff were related to expectations to the temporary staff as seminar leaders, filtering on this gave 18 responses to the relevant questions. Filtering on having duty work gave 18 responses to the questions relevant for temporary staff. See the full list of questions in the appendix, page 10.

The report has three parts. *Part one* gives short summaries of the results of the survey, starting with the response from permanent staff, followed by the response from the temporary staff. *Part two* is a discussion of the results. There has recently been changes to the *timeregnskap* at the faculty level, and in *part three* we discuss the results in view of these changes.

The report is written by Iselin Hewitt and Hannah Løke Kjos, with supplements from several others among the group of temporary staff. We hope this report can contribute to the discussion about *timeregnskap* in the department and the planning and administration of teaching. We believe that the reported experiences from temporary staff is relevant and should be taken into consideration.

Summary of survey results

Seminar teaching – expectations from the permanent staff

The survey had some questions for permanent staff as course conveners in courses with seminars taught by temporary staff:

- *What kind of work do you expect from the seminar teachers?* (multiple choice, see appendix)
- *Do you have any other comments to share?* (Open-ended, see appendix)

The main findings:

- Great variation in expectations. The number of tasks expected from the seminar leaders varies between 1 and 7 of the 8 listed options.
- Half of the permanent staff respondents expect the seminar leaders to plan the structure and content of seminars.
- More than half expect seminar leaders to give individual feedback to student assignments.

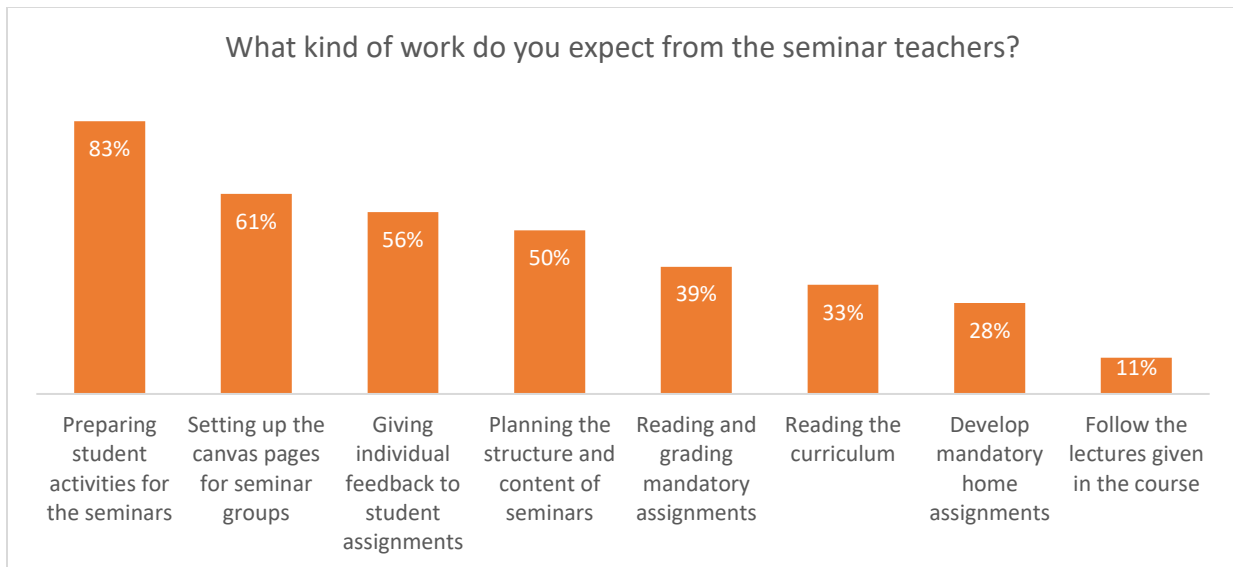


Figure 1. Response from permanent staff. Multiple choice. N=18.

Seminar teaching – great variations in amount of work

Temporary staff were asked *Please describe all the tasks related to your seminar teaching*. This open-ended question provided a lot of information about the amount of work and differences between courses. Some of the findings are:

- In general seminar teaching normally requires setting up canvas pages, preparing student activities, reading the curriculum, preparing short presentations, preparing discussions etc.
- 10 out of 17 also have had work related to planning the set-up of the seminars. Several also develop mandatory assignments.
- Meetings, communication, and administration is very time consuming. Contact with students take also take up much of the time spent.
- Methods courses are especially time consuming, with preparing resources for the students, code scripts, datasets, software support, student follow ups, trouble shooting.
- Courses with weekly text assignments demands a lot of work related to individual feedback.
- High number of students per group, or high number of assignments to approve and give feedback on is not compensated.
- There is a substantial amount of time to save on preparation if you have the same course several times. This does not apply, however, if you provide individual feedback or technical support, which is the case in many subjects. This is equally consuming every semester.

Examples from the survey:

“Generally, there are too few seminars. This amounts to very little time per student, which then leads to a lot of inquires from the students outside of the seminars”.

“As one of the main points of contact with students, being a seminar leader requires frequent email contact with students for feedback, managing, and organizing activities, groups, etc”.

“I think it would be great if we got more time to prepare. I think it would benefit the students and the temporary staff because it would provide students with better education, and staff with

less stress in relation to trying to spend the time allotted so as not to impact other parts of our job, such as advising, attending meetings, or doing research”.

The next question was *How much time did you spend on the seminar teaching?* This was also an open-ended question. The main findings:

- There are great variations in time spent for seminar teaching. The differences reflect variation in workload between different courses, as described in the previous section, and whether the teaching is repeated or not.
- Giving the same course (without changes) several semesters and teaching several groups in the same semester is an advantage.
- Around 4 out of 18 say that the hours given in the *timeregnskap* for seminars are sufficient. Several of these report having had several groups and/or the same course repeated.
- The number of students per group have significant impact on the amount of work in courses that requires individual feedback, approval of assignments, or support and follow up of individual students.

Course convener

Question for temporary staff that had been course convenors: *What is your experience as a course convener (emneansvarlig) regarding the time spent versus the duty work rates?* (open-ended). The main findings:

- The majority of the respondents experience that this far exceeds the hours that are given.
- The workload is very high, and the hours given are often spent before the semester starts.
- Some variation between courses.

Examples from the survey:

“In this case, the amount of work necessary is much higher than the rate. The faculty underestimated how much time it takes to administer a course. I believe that in the first year I was course coordinator I spend about double the amount of time I was paid for. In the second year it was somehow less, because I reused a lot of material, but still, perhaps 50% more than the official rate. This should change”.

“Administrasjon tar mer enn ti timer. Planlegging og organisering av ulike forelesere tar mye tid, det samme gjør det å svare på spørsmål og henvendelser fra studenter. Alt med digital undervisning og hybridorganisering gir merarbeid - og akkurat nå betyr overgang til full fysisk en masse henvendelser fra studenter som trenger tilpasset organisering”.

“I have not kept a detailed count of hours spent, but my colleague (which I shared the course with), and I likely spend approximately 50 hours each, each time we teach the course. I think we get 10 hours”.

“Massiv diskrepans mellom reell arbeidstid som går med og uttelling i timeregnskapet. I praksis har man brukt opp timene før emnet i det hele tatt har startet. Det er et tankekors at man kan få mer uttelling for å holde én forelesning enn å ha delt emneansvar. I emner der seminarene har blitt skrellet bort, blir emneansvarlige førstelinjen for studenter som har spørsmål. det går mye tid på å svare studenter. Å påta seg emneansvar er både en rik og dyrekjøpt erfaring. På den ene siden får man verdifull erfaring. På den andre siden, koster det mer enn det smaker.

Det synes som om stipendiater blir oppfordret til å påta seg emneansvar, men det er svært demotiverende når dette 'ansvaret' blir såpass dårlig belønnet”.

“I share the “emneansvar” with a colleague and did not spend a whole lot more than what was assigned, 15 hours”.

Giving lectures

Temporary staff were also asked *What is your experience with giving lectures regarding the time spent versus the duty work rates?* (open-ended) The main findings:

- Most comments on this question states that the 10 hours rate does not reflect the amount of time it takes to prepare a new lecture.
- Preparing a new lecture requires the double, three times as much time, or up to one week.
- Some got 10 extra hours for a new lecture, others did not.
- Some say that the rates are ok – when given 10 extra hours for a new lecture, and when the same lecture is repeated several times.

Examples from the survey:

“About double what we get. I would say I spend 10-15 hours preparing for lectures”.

“I use more a lot more time than the work rates. Especially when it's digital”.

“The duty work rates make sense if you give the same lecture more than once”.

“Preparing and giving one lecture (2*45 minutes) tends to take about 15-20 hours (4-5 hours reading, 8-10 hours developing slides and activities, 2 hours class time, 1-2 hours set-up and follow-up). When repeating a lecture, this is reduced to about 7-10 hours (1-2 hours reading, 3-5 hours revising and preparing materials and activities, 2 hours class time, 1-2 hours set-up and follow-up)”.

“It took me a week to prepare each lecture”.

“Som stipendiat, tar forberedelse til forelesning tar også mye lenger tid enn uttellingen gjenspeiler”.

Repeated teaching

The survey had two questions related to the repeating of teaching activities. One was the general question *Will you repeat, or have you repeated, the same teaching activities several semesters?* The results showed that

- 3 out of 18 replied that all teaching activities will repeat or were repeated.
- 15 replied that some of the teaching activities will repeat or were repeated.

The question *In how many different courses have you done seminar teaching?* Gave the following results

- 6 out of 18 had seminar teaching in 3 or more different courses.

Duty work plan

The temporary staff were asked *Have you got a duty work plan for your period at the department?*

- 4 out of 18 respondents (22 %) say that they have been provided such a plan by the department or having developed a plan in communication with the department. See figure 2.

- The rest had made a plan themselves, didn't have one, or didn't know.

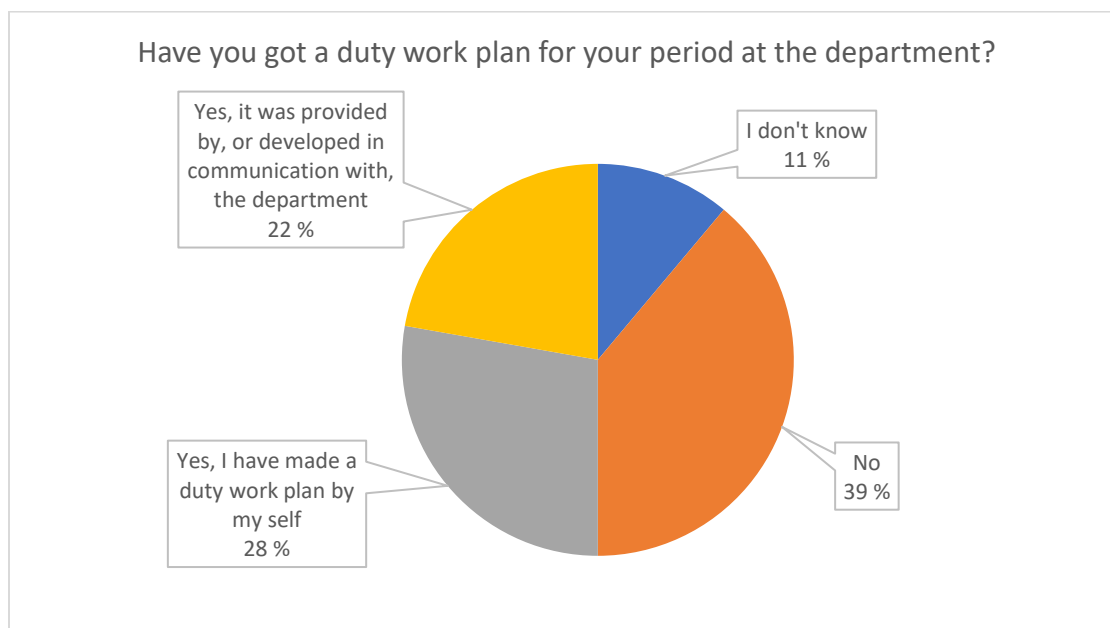


Figure 2. Have you got a duty work plan for your period at the department? N=18

Several comments in the open-ended questions were also related to the management of duty work. Several mentioned that they missed having a long-term plan for their duty work, and consequences like the lack of predictability and missed opportunities for repeating the same tasks.

Examples from the survey:

“Basert på undervisningsplanen jeg har laget, vil det være vanskelig å få nok undervisning for å nå kvoten for pliktarbeid pr semester. Det er ingen fastsatt plan for undervisere som hjelper dem med å fylle pliktarbeidstimene (ikke som jeg vet om). Man blir derfor ansvarlig for å selv finne undervisning for å fylle kvoten, som tar en del tid. Det er også lite effektiv undervisning (seminarundervisning med mulighet for å ta flere seminargrupper) og det er mye endring i emner og emneinnhold som gjør at man ikke har forutsigbarhet de neste semestrene.”

«Jeg hadde satt veldig pris på å få vite hvilke kurs jeg skal undervise i gjennom hele min ansettelses-periode og at jeg vet at jeg får undervise i samme kurset flere år/alle årene.»

«Det burde vært slik at stipendiater (og andre ansatte) med undervisningsplikt blir spurt om å undervise før man ansetter eksterne - for eksempel bruker masterstudenter eller stipendiater fra andre universiteter e.l.»

Discussion of the survey results

Course convenors – the 10 extra hours are not enough

The result from the survey shows that the work duty rates for course convenors are too low – it does not reflect the number of hours given in the *timeregnskap*. Looking at the list of tasks in figure 3, and on the [resource page for course convenors](#), we would claim that it is not surprising that the respondents

find it very difficult to cover everything within the provided hours. Based on the answers in this survey, the 10 hours increase will probably only cover a small part of the deficiency.

Course convenor / Emneansvarlig

- Academic responsibility for the development and organization of specific courses, including:
 - Content, setup, syllabus and pedagogical tools
 - Exam preparation and examiner guidelines
 - Coordination with other teaching staff participating in the course
 - If seminar teaching: develop the seminar set-up/opplegg to be applied by seminar leaders, coordinate and follow-up seminar leaders.
 - **Obs! Teaching activities should reflect the amount of hours available for teaching – avoid overload!**
 - Check the [resource page for course convenors!](#)



Figure 3. Presentation from head of the department/head of teaching 24th of March.

Seminar teaching – demanding courses or assignments are not compensated

The results from the questions about seminar teaching showed large variations between different courses. In some courses, with several groups and/or semesters, the hourly rates are sufficient. For other courses the workload far exceeds the hours given, regardless of how many groups or semesters.

The answers showed that methods courses are especially demanding due to a lot of necessary preparations and individual follow up, and that courses with weekly mandatory assignments and individual feedback are also very time consuming, especially with large student groups.

We view it as unfortunate that these variations are not compensated. Other departments for instance give extra time for every mandatory assignment to read and give feedback on (ECON 0,75h per seminar assignment, ISV 0,5h per seminar assignment), see figure 4 and 5. In our own department methods courses are given extra hours for course conveying, but there are no extra hours related to the seminars, even though the extra burden is on the seminar leaders as well.

Retting av semesteroppgave	0,75 time pr. oppgave (gjelder alle slags seminaroppgaveinnleveringer)
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Figure 4. Department specific rates at the department of economics.

Seminar	3,5 t 0,5 t per oppgave kommer i tillegg dersom emnet har kvalifiseringsoppgave e.l.	Uttelling for møter, seminarlederkurs etc. kommer i tillegg.
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Figure 5. Department specific rates at the department of political science.

Discrepancies between expectations

A comparison of the response from the permanent staff and the responsibilities listed from the head of teaching indicates different opinions about the duties of seminar leaders, and the duties of course convenors. The head of teaching states that the course convenor is responsible for developing the seminar set-up, to be applied by seminar leaders (figure 3). In the survey, half of the permanent staff replied that they expect seminar leaders to plan the structure and content of seminar. Assuming that 'developing the set-up' corresponds to 'planning the structure and content', it indicates that many of the course convenors are not aware of this responsibility. It can be challenging for new temporary staff to demand a better setup from the course convenor, it might be too late if teaching has already started, and as mentioned above the course convenors might already have more than enough to do.

These discrepancies illustrate a need for the department to communicate better who is responsible for what, not only to temporary staff, but also to the permanent staff. At the same time there is little room for adding additional work to the course convenors, without adding more additional time (more than the 10 hours increase).

The discrepancy between expectations applies to the "avoid overload" point as well. The head of teaching has on several occasions stated that to reduce the workload we should not spend time on giving individual feedback, while 10 out of 18 permanent staff responds that they expect the seminar leaders to give individual feedback to student assignments. This shows that giving feedback on student assignments are not something the seminar leaders can choose not to do. Not giving feedback is not in line with the mandatory pedagogical training given at the university either.

We find it problematic to individualize the responsibility for making the hours add up. In our view it is reasonable to expect that the department take responsibility for making the work duty rates match the actual workload, or the workload to match the rates.

Economies of scale

Descriptions of work related to seminars, lectures and courses showed that it is a great advantage if the same teaching activities are repeated several times. Having several seminar groups in the same course in the same semester, and this being repeated next year, makes the rates for seminar teaching sufficient over time for some courses. Repeating the same lecture will also make the rate closer to the real time spent for the next lecture.

On the other hand, several have had experiences of rapid changes in the content of courses, or to be allocated to many different courses, and could not get the advantages of repeated teaching tasks.

This illustrates that the workload of teaching depends a lot on how teaching duties are planned and distributed.

The planning of teaching

It is the responsibility of the heads of teaching to manage teaching resources, but the survey results show that most of the PhDs and postdocs don't have a plan for their duty work. It seems like a disciplinary difference, where the sociologists must find the work to fill the hours themselves. This will make it harder to get the advantage of repeated teaching tasks, and the burden of teaching will be higher.

This is another example, we think, of how responsibilities of the department are put on individuals.

Recent general changes in the duty work rates

There has been done smaller changes to the rates for teaching at the faculty level. PhDs are given a 15 percent add-on to the original rates, 10 extra hours for new tasks are removed, but everyone gets 30 hours for administration every semester.

We find that the 30 extra hours is a very positive change to the *timeregnskap*. It will compensate for time spent on administrative work related to grading or teaching, and some of the time lost in the fragmentation of research time due to duty work. It will also give temporary staff a better opportunity to take part in meetings and other activities at the department.

The 15 percent increase of rates will to some degree compensate that new staff need more time to prepare teaching. However, the removal of the 10 extra hours for new teaching tasks will for some probably result in less hours in total. This will depend on how your teaching is planned or unfold during the period as a PhD or postdoc. The burden of shifting between multiple courses will for instance increase with the removal of the 10 extra hours.

The results on the questions about time spent as course convenors also give reason to believe that the +15%, and the 10 extra hours for this task is not sufficient in most cases. Some of the examples given far exceeds the extra time given, see page 3-4.

The department presented calculations on the effect of these changes compared to the rates before 2018. We believe that these have some important limitations:

- Comparing the basic rates will not show the whole picture. PhDs were given up to 40 % additional time for teaching and grading before 2018¹.
- All PhDs were given up to two semesters (425 hours) reduction of duty work². Without this reduction, the total number of hours of duty work will have more importance than small changes in the rates.

We also find that the communication towards temporary staff is problematic. The example given in figure 6 shows a calculation of what is called “net” duty work per semester (netto undervisningsplikt). It is presented as if hours given for actual responsibilities and work, is not real work. As if communicating with students, administration, and mandatory pedagogical training don’t take time away from working on our own research.

¹ According to the rates before 2018, <https://www.uio.no/for-ansatte/ansettelsesforhold/arbeidstid-og-fraver/arbeidstid/arbeidspliktregnskap/sv/index-gml.html#toc8>. Permanent staff at ISS have confirmed that this was practiced at the department.

² «Alle stipendiater gis i løpet av stipendiatperioden inntil to semesters undervisningsfri i forbindelse med spesielt intensive perioder eller utenlandsopphold.» <https://www.uio.no/for-ansatte/ansettelsesforhold/arbeidstid-og-fraver/arbeidstid/arbeidspliktregnskap/sv/index-gml.html#toc8>

We assume that the hours given for administration is based on an acknowledgement of how much time it takes to take part in administration of teaching and grading, attending meetings, being up to date on information and instructions from the department, and so on. We also assume that the hours given for contact with students are based on an acknowledgement of how much time it takes to answer emails from students, follow up individual needs, etc. In the same way we view the 200 hours for pedagogical training as a necessary compensation for taking part in courses that are encouraged by the university for everyone doing teaching.

Undervisningsplikt ny PhD stipendiat 4 år, oppstart H22	Antall / timer
Total undervisningsplikt	1695
Antall semester med arbeidsplikt	8
Antall timer undervisningsplikt per semester	212
Reduksjon admin-tid: 30t x 8 semestre	240
Reduksjon treffetid: 20t x 8 semestre	160
Reduksjon Uniped: 200t	200
Undervisningsplikt etter reduksjon	1095
Reel tid	953
15% tillegg	142
Netto undervisningsplikt per semester (953/8)	119

Figure 6. From presentation in Info-meeting on April 6th 2022. Example: PhD starts H22.

In our view it is very misleading to claim that temporary staff only have 1095 hours of teaching due to “reductions”, and that it is only 953 hours in “real time” (figure 6). As if the 15 percent add-on is a bonus we can spend on our own research, and not a necessary compensation for hours spent on doing work for the department.

Concluding remarks

This report gives more information about the actual time spent on seminar teaching, and differences between courses, as requested by the department. Results of survey questions about other teaching activities have been reported as well, to give a better picture of the whole situation. We have also discussed the results considering the recent changes in hourly rates, and the information given from the department. Our discussion highlights what we consider as critical issues.

With this report we want to encourage the department to take the experiences of temporary staff seriously. The changes in the timeregnskap at the faculty level are already set, but the department specific rates, and course specific rates give room for maneuver. The experience of several members of temporary staff is also that there are extra hours available when the department find it appropriate.

Our concern is that the insufficient hours given for teaching have negative effects on the research progress and wellbeing of temporary staff. We are also concerned about the consequences of insufficient hours for the quality of teaching. In conclusion we will share some quotes from the last question for temporary staff, *In general, what is your experience with teaching duties at the department?*.

“I love teaching. I don't see it as a duty but a very positive part of my job, but it takes a lot of time away from research and the amount should be better balanced.”

“It is messy and disorganized. Very often the needs of the PhDs aren't taken into consideration.”

“I am quite disappointed. There is no proportionality between time spent and what we receive of hours. This is particularly when being a course convener as well as "senior".”

“The little time that is awarded for teaching affects the quality of the teaching”

“Ambisjonene for kvalitet i undervisningen matcher ikke timeuttelingen. UNIPED-kursene inspirerer til å lage kreative og gode undervisningsopplegg, men timene strekker ikke til.”

“I love teaching, but it has become a burden. It feels like too much”

Appendix

Table 1. The survey questions.

Permanent staff
Have you been a course convener (emneansvarlig) at the department during the last five years? <i>(yes / no)</i>
Have any of those courses had seminars taught by temporary staff? <i>(yes /no)</i>
What kind of work do you expect from the seminar teachers? <i>(multiple choice)</i>
Please describe other tasks. <i>(open-ended)</i>
Do you have any other comments to share? <i>(open-ended)</i>
Temporary staff
Do you have, or have you had, teaching duties at the department? <i>(yes/no)</i>
What kind of teaching have you done, or are you doing? <i>(seminars/lectures/course convenor)</i>
Will you repeat, or have you repeated, the same teaching activities several semesters? <i>(alternatives)</i>
In how many different courses have you done seminar teaching? <i>(alternatives)</i>
Please describe all the tasks related to your seminar teaching. <i>(open-ended)</i>
How much time did you spend on the seminar teaching? <i>(open-ended)</i>
Have you got any other comments or experiences related to the seminar teaching? <i>(open-ended)</i>
What is your experience as a course convener (emneansvarlig) regarding the time spent versus the duty work rates? <i>(open-ended)</i>
What is your experience with giving lectures regarding the time spent versus the duty work rates? <i>(open-ended)</i>
Have you got a duty work plan for your period at the department? <i>(alternatives)</i>
In general what is your experience with teaching duties at the department? <i>(open-ended)</i>