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Academic workload and working time : retrospective perceptions versus time-series data

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to examine the validity of perceptions by academic staff about their past and present workload and working hours. Retrospective assessments are compared with time-series data. The data are drawn from four mail surveys among academic staff in Norwegian universities undertaken in the period 1982-2008. The findings show that many academic staff retrospectively perceive that expectations of their work and task performance have increased and hence that they now work longer hours. In contrast, when time-series data are used to measure changes in time use (on an aggregate level) no empirical evidence is found in support of this claim; instead, a slight decline in the average number of weekly working hours can be observed. Two possible reasons for this disparity are discussed. First, that heavier workloads do not necessarily imply that academic staff work longer hours. Second, that younger generations of academic staff may report fewer work hours than previous counterparts. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)