

Know Your Agreement

Reductions in Scheduled Class Times

Clauses 60.3 – 60.8

The Scheduled Class Time (SCT) reductions of one hour in 2023 and a further half-hour in 2024 are the biggest changes to SCT in decades.

This reduction eases pressure on teachers and provides more time for them to prepare classes, assess student work and deal with other associated tasks during the working week.

- SCT for full-time teachers in primary schools will be 21 hours per week in 2024, down from 22.5 hours under the previous Agreement.
- SCT for full-time teachers in secondary schools will be 18.5 hours per week from 2024, down from 20 hours in 2022.
- SCT for first-year teachers in primary schools will be 19.5 hours per week, down from 21 hours.
- SCT for first year teachers in primary schools will be 16.5 hours per week from 2024 down from 18 hours.

In addition to this, extras in secondary schools are being phased out and this Agreement clarifies for the first time that scheduled assemblies are now included in the calculation of SCT.

Why is this important?

Australian teachers spend significantly more time in the classroom than the OECD average. Our primary teachers are scheduled to teach almost 10% over the average, increasing to over 22% in upper secondary. This leaves less time for all of the other work that teachers need to complete. While time in the classroom is of course core business for teachers, there is a clear quality vs quantity trade-off – and this Agreement helps to ensure that

teachers have the time they need outside of the classroom to make the most of the time they have with their students and deliver the best quality education.

Source – *Education at a Glance – OECD 2022*

Sue Thomson, Deputy Chief Executive for the Australian Council of Educational Research (which helped the OECD compile the survey results), told *The Age* teachers were coming under increasing pressure. And that was before COVID lockdowns further intensified workloads.

‘It’s important that teachers get time to reflect, to observe other teachers and talk to mentors, but we’re not allowing them any of that time. We’re always talking about extra things that teachers need to be doing, different skills they need, but we don’t give them time to do the things that we know make them good teachers,’ Dr Thomson said.

The transition period

During the implementation phase, schools in some areas are struggling to pass on the full benefits of the reduction in scheduled class time. Some have had to resort to what we call ‘shaving’ – or reducing SCT by making each period slightly shorter.

While this may technically reduce scheduled class time, it **does not** meet the agreed intention of the reduction in SCT, which is to reduce workloads and provide teachers with blocks of time that can be used meaningfully. Teachers do not get a significant reduction in workload if they teach the same number of kids, in the same number of periods.

We are prepared to accept this when necessary on a short-term basis, as employer representatives have made a clear commitment that 'shaving' is a temporary measure, and readily acknowledge that this does reduce teacher workload as intended. They understand that, if necessary, the IEU will push back hard against shaving from a workload perspective and will not hesitate to be public and strong with parents on the consequent reduction in class time for their kids.

Benefits of a reduction in SCT

From next year, a primary teacher will have 9 hours per week 'quarantined' for them to use at their discretion for class-related work such as planning, preparation and assessment. For a secondary teacher this will be 11.5 hours per week. This time must be available in 'usable blocks' (ie. not 10-minute windows between classes and duties!) and cannot be directed by their employer.

Many schools started operating with reduction in SCT at the start of 2023, before the Agreement was finalised, to ensure a smoother transition to the new workload conditions.

With extras being phased out and stricter regulation of teacher workloads with the 30 + 8 model and the introduction of time in lieu, these reductions will help teachers to spend more time putting a premium on quality, focused classes.

IEU Rep Fiona Wright, from Avila College, told The Point, "The reduction in scheduled class time has been a significant acknowledgment of the workload issues of teachers. This job has changed over the years and the administrative demands have increased dramatically. By reducing SCT teachers have won back some of the time they have lost on all this administration – including compliance modules".

Geoff Martin, Rep at Mount Clear College said, "I think the reduction of face-to-face teaching allows for teachers extra time to attend to all the many facets of preparation, assessment, reporting and communication with families. It provides recognition that much careful planning and preparation is required outside of the classroom in order for the classroom to operate effectively".

Marie-Claire Anastasiadis, Ave Maria College Rep, said "I love the reduction in face-to-face teaching time in that it now gives me an extra hour of planning my classes or writing personalised learning plans".

The reduction in SCT, alongside other workload measures, helps to claim back time that teachers need to do their job effectively and well without risking their own wellbeing.