

**ASSOCIATION OF ANAESTHETISTS OF
GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND**

**WORK LOAD FOR CONSULTANT ANAESTHETISTS
IN IRELAND
SUPPLEMENT 1993**

March 1993

Workload for Consultant Anaesthetists in Ireland

Supplement 1993

Introduction

In May 1992 the Association of Anaesthetists of Great Britain and Ireland and its Standing Committee in Ireland published a booklet containing advice and guidance for consultant anaesthetists pertaining to the revised common contract which had recently been offered to all consultants working in the Health Services in the Republic of Ireland.

The booklet dealt with a range of topics including the practice plan and scheduling of commitments and gave a number of examples of weekly work schedules for consultant anaesthetists and should be read in conjunction with these notes.

As many hospital managers and chief executive officers are about to begin negotiations with individual consultant anaesthetists about practice plans, the Association and the Standing Committee consider it appropriate to provide some more examples of work schedules and to draw the attention of anaesthetists and managers to some important aspects of the revised common contract in this regard.

1. Although practice plans must be agreed between individual consultants and the employing authority we advise that a corporate response should be agreed within the department so that the anaesthetic services to the hospital are properly covered and the workload fairly distributed.
2. It is imperative that every consultant obtains a detailed job description before negotiations start, otherwise serious misunderstandings are inevitable.
3. Some managers may wish to discuss weekly work schedules only. This is unacceptable as it forms only part of the practice plan. There are other aspects of the practice plan which are crucial to the provision of a safe and adequate anaesthetic service, namely:
 - a) **Resources**
This refers to budget allocation, staffing levels and equipment and facilities, secretarial assistance and office space.
 - b) **Cover arrangements**
Consultants are not required to cover the elective work of colleagues who are on leave. The manner in which such elective work is to be handled needs proper planning and the provision of locums.
 - c) **Continuing Medical Education**
Management in recognising the importance of continuing medical education for consultants has give a contractual undertaking to support and facilitate such efforts (MA.4.15).
 - d) **Audit**
Anaesthetists are expected to audit their activities both as individuals and as members of the anaesthetic department. Management has also given an undertaking to support medical audit. (MA 724).

4. New developments in the speciality and their effects on practice.

Standards in clinical practice are continuously evolving. Proper planning is therefore essential if clinicians and departments are to respond appropriately to new developments in the speciality (appendix HCCD).

Fixed and Flexible Commitments

The Standing Committee recommended that a maximum of 18 hours per week (six sessions) be set aside for fixed commitments. It may be necessary to point out to some managers that this does not represent all clinical work done by anaesthetists as a considerable amount of clinical work is also carried out during flexible sessions.

Work in Intensive Care and Obstetric Units

In some small hospitals it may be possible to provide cover for intensive care and the obstetric unit in a flexible manner. In large hospitals, work in these areas will undoubtedly require fixed commitments each day, particularly where the obstetric unit is off site.

Medical Audit

Individual consultants may feel it appropriate to audit their work as a flexible commitment. However where audit sessions involve the entire department (or a number of small units in a region) a definite period of time, say one day per month, would require to be set aside as a fixed commitment for this purpose.

Administration

All anaesthetic departments require some organisation and planning, most of which can be carried out as flexible commitments. For large departments, the volume of administrative work can be considerable and may well warrant a fixed commitment.

Teaching

The majority of anaesthetists have some commitment to teaching which they carry out in a flexible manner. However, fixed commitments should be set aside for regular, formal lectures, major teaching ward rounds or regular tutorials, e.g. on cardio-pulmonary resuscitation, or for involvement in drawing up and testing major accident plans.

All consultants are entitled to eight rest days per month. In small units where the probability of call out is high, consultants may wish to incorporate rest days into their weekly work schedule. In large units, especially those with experienced trainees, consultants may prefer to accumulate rest days and take them en bloc.

Many consultants have off-site clinical commitments. The time spent travelling between the base hospital and the peripheral unit may be considerable and should be allowed for in the work schedule.

“If the time actually worked on a scheduled session consistently and significantly varies from the notional three hour commitment, there will be a review of the scheduled commitment. When the commitment is being unavoidably exceeded for reasons of a temporary nature, local arrangements shall be made to compensate the consultant concerned.”

Weekly work Schedules

Examples of weekly work schedules are given overleaf.

Part I should contain the fixed commitments only, indicating the location and day on which they are to be discharged.

Part II is a list of all scheduled commitments of the consultant along with the average time required to discharge them. This gives consultants an opportunity to indicate to management any discrepancy between the contractual commitment i.e. 33 scheduled hours per week, and the actual work carried out by the consultant.

Part III is an example of a weekly work schedule for the particular anaesthetic units with fixed commitments only indicated.

Sample work schedules for small units can be drawn up relatively easily but for larger units the task becomes quite complicated and would require to be tailored to specific anaesthetic units. The Standing Committee considers it inappropriate to attempt such a task, but sample schedules for individual consultants working in large units are given.

Finally, completion of the work schedule is not an opportunity to abruptly reduce workload. Work being carried out presently should be continued for a reasonable time so that management has the opportunity to recruit more staff or reduce the work in a planned manner.

Sample Work Schedule

Recommended outline weekly schedule for consultant staff

NAME: Dr A
 SPECIALTY: Anaesthesia
 CONTRACT: Whole time/Geographical Wholetime
 Part-time
 Other
 (delete as appropriate)

Weekly Timetable for Fixed Commitments

	Hospital/Location	Type of Work
Monday	Hospital A	Theatre
Tuesday	Hospital A	Day Unit Assessment
Wednesday	Hospital A	Theatre
Thursday	Hospital A	
Friday	Hospital A	

Type of Duty Average Number of Hours

Theatre.....	18
Ward Work.....	5
Endoscopy Unit/X-Ray etc.....	
Intensive Care Unit.....	6
Obstetric Unit.....	
Teaching.....	1
Administration.....	1
Audit.....	1
Special Interests.....	
Other (specify).....Day Unit Assessment.....	3

Note: Completion of this table does not give rise to a contractual duty to work beyond actual contractual commitment.

Units with two consultants providing cover for one operating theatre, intensive care unit and a day case assessment unit.
 Intensive care commitment worked flexibly.
 One flexible theatre session on Friday.
 One rest day set aside each week (Friday). Remaining rest days to be accumulated and taken later.

Sample Weekly Work Schedule of Fixed Commitments for Units with 2 Consultants

Anaesthetists	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
A		Theatre	Day Unit	Theatre	
Average time (hours)		(6)	(3)	(6)	
B	Theatre	Day Unit	Theatre		
Average time (hours)	(6)	(3)	(6)		

Sample Work Schedule

Recommended outline weekly schedule for consultant staff

NAME: Dr C
 SPECIALTY: Anaesthesia
 CONTRACT: Whole time/Geographical Wholetime
 Part-time
 Other
 (delete as appropriate)

Weekly Timetable for Fixed Commitments

	Hospital/Location	Type of Work
Monday	Hospital C	
Tuesday	Hospital C	Theatre
Wednesday	Hospital C	
Thursday	Hospital C	Theatre
Friday	Hospital C	

Type of Duty	Average Number of Hours
Theatre.....	12
Ward Work.....	4
Endoscopy Unit/X-Ray etc.....	
Intensive Care Unit.....	15
Obstetric Unit.....	
Teaching.....	1
Administration.....	
Audit.....	1
Special Interests.....	
Other (specify).....ECT and Dental Clinic.....	4

Note: Completion of this table does not give rise to a contractual duty to work beyond actual contractual commitment.

Units with two consultants providing cover for one operating theatre, intensive care unit and an obstetric unit with twenty-four epidural service, dental clinic and ECT sessions.
 Obstetric and intensive care commitments worked flexibly.
 One rest day set aside each week (Friday). Remaining rest days to be accumulated and taken later.

Sample Weekly Work Schedule of Fixed Commitments for Units with 2 Consultants

Anaesthetists	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
C		Theatre/Dental		Theatre/ECT	
Average time (hours)		(6/2)		(6/2)	
D	Theatre		Theatre/Dental		
Average time (hours)	(8)		(6/2)		

Sample Work Schedule

Recommended outline weekly schedule for consultant staff

NAME: Dr E
 SPECIALTY: Anaesthesia
 CONTRACT: Whole time/Geographical Wholetime
 Part-time
 Other
 (delete as appropriate)

Weekly Timetable for Fixed Commitments

	Hospital/Location	Type of Work
Monday	Hospital E	Theatre
Tuesday	Hospital E	Theatre
Wednesday	Hospital E	
Thursday	Hospital E	Theatre
Friday	Hospital E	

Type of Duty Average Number of Hours

Theatre.....	18
Ward Work.....	5
Endoscopy Unit/X-Ray etc.....	
Intensive Care Unit.....	6
Obstetric Unit.....	
Teaching.....	2
Administration.....	2
Audit.....	1
Special Interests.....	
Other (specify).....acute pain.....	4

Note: Completion of this table does not give rise to a contractual duty to work beyond actual contractual commitment.

Unit with 3 consultants providing cover for 2 operating theatres and an intensive care unit in a hospital with a regional trauma and orthopaedic centre. Acute pain service includes twenty-four epidural service and PCA.

Regular tutorial in CPR given by anaesthetists.

Intensive care and acute pain service managed as flexible commitments. One rest day (Friday) set aside each week. Remaining rest days to be accumulated and taken later.

Sample Weekly Work Schedule of Fixed Commitments for Units with 3 Consultants

Anaesthetists	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
E	Theatre	Theatre		Theatre	
Average time (hours)	(6)	(6)		(6)	

F	Theatre	Theatre	Theatre
Average time (hours)	(8)	(6)	(6)
G	Theatre	Theatre	Theatre
Average time (hours)	(6)	(6)	(6)

Sample Work Schedule

Recommended outline weekly schedule for consultant staff

NAME: Dr H

SPECIALTY: Anaesthesia

CONTRACT: Whole time/Geographical Wholetime
Part-time
Other
(delete as appropriate)

Weekly Timetable for Fixed Commitments

	Hospital/Location	Type of Work
Monday	Hospital H	Theatre
Tuesday	Hospital H	Theatre
Wednesday	Hospital H	Theatre
Thursday	Hospital H	
Friday	Hospital H	

Type of Duty	Average Number of Hours
Theatre.....	20
Ward Work.....	8
Endoscopy Unit/X-Ray etc.....	4
Intensive Care Unit.....	
Obstetric Unit.....	
Teaching.....	1
Administration.....	1
Audit.....	1
Special Interests.....	
Other (specify).....Acute pain service	4

Note: Completion of this table does not give rise to a contractual duty to work beyond actual contractual commitment.

Unit with four consultants providing cover for 3 operating theatres, intensive care unit, x-ray department and endoscopy unit and an acute pain service which included twenty-four hour epidural service and PCA.

Theatre commitment includes one flexible session each day which is the responsibility of the consultant on call.

Commitments to ICU, x-ray department and the acute pain service are managed flexibly.

Sample Weekly Work Schedule of Fixed Commitments for Units with 4 Consultants

Anaesthetists	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
H	Theatre	Theatre	Theatre		
Average time (hours)	(6)	(4)	(6)		

I	Theatre	Theatre	Theatre	
Average time (hours)	(4)	(6)	(6)	
J	Theatre		Theatre	Theatre Theatre
Average time (hours)	(6)		(4)	(6) (4)
K		Theatre	Theatre	Theatre Theatre
Average time (hours)		(4)	(6)	(4) (6)

Sample Work Schedule

Recommended outline weekly schedule for consultant staff

NAME: Dr L.....
SPECIALTY: Anaesthesia
CONTRACT: Whole time/Geographical Wholetime
Part-time
Other
(delete as appropriate)

Weekly Timetable for Fixed Commitments

	Hospitals/Location	Type of Work
Monday	Hospital L	Theatre
Tuesday	Hospital L	
Wednesday	Hospital L	Obstetrics
Thursday	Hospital L	
Friday	Hospital L	Theatre

Type of Duty	Average Number of Hours
Theatre.....	12
Ward Work.....	5
Endoscopy Unit/X-Ray etc.....	
Intensive Care Unit.....	8
Obstetric Unit.....	6
Teaching.....	2
Administration.....	
Audit.....	1
Special Interests.....	
Other (specify).....Chairman Medical Staff Committee.....	2

Note: Completion of this table does not give rise to a contractual duty to work beyond actual contractual commitment.

Monday	Hospital P	Theatre
Tuesday	Hospital P	
Wednesday	Hospital P	Obstetric Unit
Thursday	Hospital P	Administrator/Teaching
Friday	Hospital P	Dental

Type of Duty	Average Number of Hours
Theatre.....	8
Ward Work.....	6
Endoscopy Unit/X-Ray etc.....	6
Intensive Care Unit.....	
Obstetric Unit.....	8
Teaching.....	
Administration Chairman of Ethics Committee.....	Chairman of Ethics Committee.....4
Audit.....	1
Special Interests.....	
Other (specify).....	Dental Clinic.....

Note: Completion of this table does not give rise to a contractual duty to work beyond actual contractual commitment.

Consultant P working in a major teaching hospital. Fixed commitments include an all day theatre list and a half day in the dental clinic, as well as a day per week in the obstetric unit. Work involved in organising regular weekly tutorials for trainees and as Chairman of the Hospital Ethics Committee also warrants a fixed commitment.

Rest days are accumulated and taken later.

Sample Weekly Work Schedule of Fixed Commitments for Units with Consultants

Anaesthetists	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
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Sample Work Schedule

Recommended outline weekly schedule for consultant staff

NAME: Dr Q
 SPECIALTY: Anaesthesia
 CONTRACT: Whole time/Geographical Wholetime
 Part-time
 Other
 (delete as appropriate)

Weekly Timetable for Fixed Commitments

	Hospital/Location	Type of Work
Monday	Hospital Q	ICU
Tuesday	Hospital Q	
Wednesday	Hospital Q	ICU/teaching
Thursday	Hospital Q	
Friday	Hospital Q	ICU

Type of Duty Average Number of Hours

Theatre.....	
Ward Work.....	
Endoscopy Unit/X-Ray etc.....	
Intensive Care Unit.....	20
Obstetric Unit.....	
Teaching.....	4
Administration.....Chairman medical staff.....	3
Audit.....Co-ordinator for Anaesthetic Unit.....	4
Special Interests.....	
Other (specify).....Research.....	5

Note: Completion of this table does not give rise to a contractual duty to work beyond actual contractual commitment.

Consultant Q working in a large teaching hospital and has special responsibility for Intensive Care, including a major teaching ward round each week.

Flexible commitments include work as Chairman of the Medical Staff and Audit Co-ordinator for the anaesthetic unit.

Rest days are accumulated and taken en bloc.

Sample Weekly Work Schedule of Fixed Commitments for Units with Consultants

Anaesthetists	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
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Sample Work Schedule

Recommended outline weekly schedule for consultant staff

NAME: Dr R
 SPECIALTY: Anaesthesia
 CONTRACT: Whole time/Geographical Wholetime
 Part-time
 Other
 (delete as appropriate)

Weekly Timetable for Fixed Commitments

	Hospital/Location	Type of Work
Monday	Hospital R/Off site	Theatre/Dental clinic
Tuesday	Hospital R	
Wednesday	Hospital R	Theatre
Thursday	Hospital R	
Friday	Hospital R	Theatre

Type of Duty	Average Number of Hours
Theatre.....	20
Ward Work.....	5
Endoscopy Unit/X-Ray etc.....	4
Intensive Care Unit(plus acute pain service).....	4
Obstetric Unit.....	
Teaching.....	1
Administration.....	
Audit.....	1
Special Interests.....Pain clinic.....	1
Other (specify).....Travelling time.....	1

Note: Completion of this table does not give rise to a contractual duty to work beyond actual contractual commitment.

Consultant in a large teaching hospital with fixed commitments in theatre and an off-site dental clinic. Commitments to Intensive care and X-Ray Department worked flexibly. Special interest in chronic pain requires one out-patient session each month.
 Rest days are accumulated and taken en bloc.

Sample Weekly Work Schedule of Fixed Commitments for Units with Consultants

Anaesthetists	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
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