

Consequences of Renewal – examples

I have spent nearly all my time in the last month doing administration – particularly, wrangling with CAS and LMS, and communicating endlessly with students to try and iron out the endless problems they create. Specific examples:

- CAS assigning 38 students to a tutorial that should have 20 in it, necessitating a lengthy negotiation with dozens of individual students about their timetables
- CAS suddenly and randomly cancelling tutorials in the middle of week 2 and moving students to new tutes in different times and places
- LMS not playing lecture recordings in any browser other than Firefox
- me telling students to listen to an online lecture if they missed the live event, and then complete a quiz to demonstrate they have done so, only to discover belatedly (because I couldn't check the lecture due to the Firefox issue) **that LMS had actually streamed a completely different lecture from last year**
- LMS showing completely different tutorial groups from those on LMS
- Trying to work out how to generate an appropriate spreadsheet for my tutors (still working on that one)
- Students emailing me to tell me that they can't find / access / do things on LMS, despite the painstaking hours I have spent making the environment as fool-proof as possible

Time spent moving endlessly in and out of CAS, LMS, Outlook, Staff Connect, Timetables, and Outlook (and then the endless layers of screens within each platform) should not be underestimated, nor should the terrifyingly rapid accumulation of “administrivia” in my Inbox every time I take time out for teaching preparation, meetings with postgraduates, service duties, or any of the other tasks that I must complete. It would be perfectly possible to spend 8 hours a day just answering emails in a timely fashion, so I've been working 10+ hour days and also large chunks of weekends just to keep on top of things.

I'm on a salary of over \$100 000 a year and my expertise is not administration, so when it comes to things like manipulating spreadsheets I'm sure that I'm often slower at it than actual administrators would be. Spending so much time administrating has compromised my time spent on preparing teaching content (let alone research, ha!) and it seems to me that I'm a highly expensive administrator.

For what it's worth, my personal experiences.

Before the implementation of the centralisation of services I would get a reply back the same day from admin staff re invoices, HR questions, ordering, purchasing. That way I knew it had been received and was dealt with (or I knew exactly when it was going to be dealt with).

I now have had the experience (multiple occasions) of not receiving an answer until I sent a reminder email a couple of days later.

Processes take much longer than they used to (invoices that need to be sent out, payments to third parties, reimbursements etc).

In our School we also lost our main student enquiry office (There is no admin presence in our building at all). This was an office that was easily recognisable for students as a place of contact. I think that reducing these kind of services to students does not benefit student experience.

Reimbursements on receipts for work related expenses are not happening? Even after submission months ago. Why is this?

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So far I have observed:

- 1) *Uncertainty, anxiety, and grief all around*
- 2) *The 'team leader' for Admin in my school had no experience in the school and, from what I understand, with any student services at all. Essential teaching contracts were not sent to HR with unit coordinators getting contracts as late as week 2. The competent administrative officers with long experience on the job in this school, with these academics, and doing the necessary activities have picked up the slack and are doing a terrific job but are really at the end of their tether.*
- 3) *Graduation issues.*
 - i. *The invitation for March 10 Graduation arrived for Arts staff on 1 March.*
 - ii. *A colleague who resigned in the process of "renewals" was told he could not join the procession at graduation on 10 March because of a late RSVP (despite this being five days ahead of the date. He had been invited to attend graduation of a doctoral student he had supervised but the invitation was sent to his discontinued UWA email. In the past, when invitations to graduation were circulated in a timely fashion, academics have RSVP'd at the 11th hour and have been included in the procession. Incidentally, the dais was more than half empty. Unbelievable. (THIS WAS CONVEYED TO UWAASA BY MULTIPLE STAFF MEMBERS)*
 - iii. *I spoke to one PhD student who was told a particular date was her graduation ceremony only to be contacted later with information that she should attend the ceremony next week with the rest of her Faculty. Her son, however, had already booked his flight from Melbourne for Thursday so she also was not graduated with any fellow students or supervisors.*

Here are my renewal stories:

a. I have now waited for two whole months since I submitted research cost reimbursements worth 5,000 dollars. I still have not been reimbursed. Never in over a decade at this institution have I waited so long. I should charge interest.

b. I tried to hire a research assistant. In the past I would have told my local admin person and within a week it would all be done. Now I had to send an email to a "team" email. No answer for a week. Then I was asked a string of questions by several people, always with several days delay. Then it all went quiet. When I inquired, I got an out of office email stating that the person in charge was now on paternity leave until 2018. After a somewhat impatiently worded email I got again several people respond in quick succession. None of them seemed to have found the time to read the email string, so they all asked the same questions. I still don't have a research assistant after two weeks out.

c. in the School of X we have been told that there will no longer be administrative support for X meetings. Preparation of meetings and even minute taking will now have to be done by academics. Given academic salaries this amounts to gold-plating agendas and minutes.

After obtaining a travel advance for field work, the receipts, list of expenses etc, was submitted in mid-December, yet this has not been reconciled with my research account (that is, the money has not been taken out of my account) as of 3 months later. Also, I have lost professional staff support for an administrative role I perform; as a result, the normal 15% of my time that this takes has increased to 20% AND there are high volume periods that will hit in the next couple of months that will, quite frankly, be impossible. And, many of the professional staff I interact with feel overworked and under- appreciated and no longer have the "we'll get it done" attitude that used to prevail. Decreases my time for teaching and research (my actual job) and is generally Very sad.

I have heard from a number of general staff that they feel their new jobs are simply not possible to do within a working week.
