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Working hours and accounting for working hours

The NHH Board 19.6.2014 adopted permanent regulations regarding working hours and accounting for working hours. The regulations are in accordance with the Working Environment Law, Chapter 10. The new rules represent codification of current practice, and do not require faculty members to account for their working hours. This exception to the general rules, applies to employees in “particularly independent posts”. The downside is that faculty may not demand overtime pay. At NHH there is a broad consensus that these regulations make eminent sense.

However, this may be the right time to reflect on what the regulations actually mean, and, in particular, what they do not mean. We are still subject to a 37.5 hour work week. “Independent posts” means that we have considerable freedom concerning when and where to work as we have always had. Our performance with respect to teaching as well as research is regularly reviewed based on output, not on input. Still, we should be present at the work place during normal working hours unless we have good reasons to be elsewhere.



Presence at the workplace is important since everyone has an obligation to interact with colleagues and be accessible to students. Also, established faculty members should act as role models for younger colleagues. Working from home may be productive and constitute a valid reason for absence. It is important, however, to find the right balance between different concerns. The department chairs are responsible for making sure individuals meet all their obligations. Those who have special preferences with respect to modes of working are encouraged to enter into a dialogue with their supervisor to obtain their consent. It is also important that everyone is within reach at any time, via e-mail, mobile phone or department secretaries.

To have reached consensus on this important issue is great. However, we should all realize that not having to account for working hours is a practical solution to a practical problem. Many professionals do have to account for their working hours. Flexible working condition and self-regulation is a right we have. However, these rights should not be confused with the fundamental principles of academic freedom. Management control exists in academia as well.

Yours sincerely

Frøystein Gjesdal
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