

## Case Study: Education



## University of Northampton

### Executive summary

Security staffing arrangements at the University of Northampton were failing to meet the organisation's operational requirements. Moreover, the current system was a financial drain on resources, with 'extra' staffing costs raising the overall salary bill by 20 per cent. As such, the university called in Working Time Solutions (WTS) to assess current working time practices and devise more effective and less costly shift patterns for full-time security staff.



### Key Challenges

- Huge overtime expenses
- Access to staff for statutory training was difficult.
- Inconsistent terms & conditions for staff
- Inadequate system in place to cover holidays or sickness
- All annual and sickness incurred additional overtime costs

### Key Outcomes

- Reduction in overtime pay
- More efficient allocation of staff
- Greater access to staff to facilitate staff training
- Enhanced operational planning
- 'Banked' hours accounted for, covering holiday and sick days
- Employees have better visibility of their working patterns
- Better work/life balance

### Key Learnings

- Set clear objectives
- Involve stakeholders early on
- Regularly inform and update all stakeholders throughout the planning and implementation processes
- Engage positively and provide opportunity for feedback
- Be prepared to review and refine processes
- Utilise an objective third party such as Working Time Solutions for expertise, insight and credibility

## Background

The University of Northampton spans two campuses, accommodating around 14,000 students, six schools and a business and conference centre. To maintain its profile and keep ahead of the increasing competition in higher education, the university recently invested millions of pounds in new and existing facilities, which include restaurants, bars and shops in addition to department buildings and student residences.

The university's security is operated by social enterprise and wholly owned university subsidiary, 1<sup>st</sup> Degree Facilities. A team of 20 full-time security officers plus one supervisor oversee the two university campuses – Park Campus and Avenue Campus.

## The Challenge

The security teams worked 12-hour shifts, alternating four days on, four days off and rotating day (06:00-18:00) and night shifts (18:00-06:00). The officers were split into four teams of five, with three of each team's five members located at the Park Campus and two at the Avenue Campus.

The previous working time system meant that 50 per cent of the security officers were off duty at any given time. In cases of both planned and unexpected absence, these staff would be called upon for cover. However, these extra shifts were recompensed at overtime rates of pay and the absence of any holiday provisions, overtime costs for this alone were as high as £130,000 in a year at the time of consulting WTS.

Furthermore, dissatisfaction on the part of employees had been expressed regarding differences in rates of overtime pay granted to individual staff members; some staff had been historically Tupe'd and received different overtime rates to newer employees.

## The Approach

Managing Director of 1<sup>st</sup> Degree Facilities, Jonathan Face contacted experts Working Time Solutions to help revise the working time arrangements.

The brief from 1<sup>st</sup> Degree Facilities emphasised the need to balance the delivery of its core security services to the university with the financial needs of the business.

WTS responded by outlining all of the options available, to then discuss the key features, pros and cons of each approach with the client. Specialist scheduling software allowed WTS to create an accurate picture of the organisation's requirements and calculate necessary outgoings associated with each working pattern.