A Day in the Life of an FE Lecturer

8.15am to 9.00am
I teach Administration to a wide range of classes. My day starts (by choice) between 8.15 and 8.30 am when I reach the workroom which I share with all staff in my division. The first person to arrive fills and boils the kettle! Having checked my tray for mail, I try to check my emails as well. Very often there is no time to reply to emails at this point, as there is also the telephone to answer, visitors to the workroom to deal with and colleagues to discuss things with. In all this activity, materials for the classes that day need to be gathered. Very often last minute photocopying takes place prior to lessons. Somewhere in there too is a cup of coffee.

I normally have my folders, materials, disks, etc. ready in the room before the class starts. We move from room to room for different classes, particularly as we have specialist rooms, so there can be several journeys made gathering and transporting materials from a variety of sources. We have no support staff to assist us.

9.00am to 10.45am
My first class is a mixed group of 14 young students in the Training Offices. They are hoping to achieve a unit entitled “Office Practice: An Activity Approach” at Access 3 level as well as a Keyboarding unit. This is a big class at this level and often such a class would be divided into 2 with 2 lecturers and auxiliary support. This year this was not possible so the 14 students have me for both subjects and the support of Judy, the auxiliary.

At the beginning of the class all 14 students gather in one room and I introduce a new topic in Office Practice – Health and Safety. They contribute well to class discussion and I use a lot of praise when answers are forthcoming to encourage greater participation and cooperation. Some written work is necessary and help must be given with spelling and layout of what is suggested/dictated. The support of the auxiliary is crucial at this point. The class moves to computers in both training offices and organise themselves to continue with Keyboarding using a textbook and support from the auxiliary and me. Reminders about logins and passwords are necessary. While they are keyboarding, I introduce groups of 2 or 3 to the franking machine so that the outcome on outgoing mail can be attempted next week.

Student concentration is at its best if work is done in small sections, so a break is taken round 10 am and the class ends before 11 am so that another short break is possible. When this class goes well, it is very satisfying to feel that the effort and organisation have paid off. When progress is not made, it is very frustrating to find the lesson has fallen apart. Certainly, I am kept on my toes and have to work hard to try to ensure a successful outcome to the lessons.

11.00am to 1.00pm
I have a coffee before my next class, which is Word Processing in a computer room. Prior to the break I leave the marking for the students to pick up and study at the start of the lesson. They are part time students mainly aiming at OCR (Oxford, Cambridge and RSA) exams in Text Processing or SQA modules in Word Processing although there is no compulsion to sit an exam or assessment. Some of the students are in employment and some are trying to improve their qualifications to gain employment. In addition some students merely want to learn more about Word Processing for their own use or pleasure. I really enjoy the pace of this class as there is a wide range of levels and abilities within the group. They are rarely taught as a whole class but small groups or individuals concentrate on what is necessary for their chosen exam. Students can be working on Word Processing, Audio Transcription, Powerpoint presentations, Text Processing or Mail Merge and I have to switch from one to the
other to the next. It is hard work, but the time passes very quickly as there is too much to do. I do not sit down and at the end of the class. I gather yet more work in the shape of the marking of the papers the students have completed. There is not time to mark in college so that will be done at home before the class resumes next week, when they will benefit from the feedback and apply it to the next paper they produce.

1.00pm to 2.00pm
Lunch time

2.00pm to 4.00pm
In the afternoon I teach “Using Information Technology in Business” to students who are following either a Higher National Certificate or Diploma course in Administration and Information Management. The students are mainly full time although part time students are also taking this subject as part of their first year or second year studies. The college operates very flexibly so students are also infilled into classes where there is space. This year this is a large class which involves me in a lot of detailed marking. They are working towards their final assessment which will test the full range of functions which have been covered in the classes. I can teach the whole group together despite the fact they all come from different backgrounds. I have previously drawn the class together so that they are ready to acquire new skills in database as required by the unit specification. It is a very enjoyable class – they are well motivated and the work flows well. Once again marking is collected at the end of the class.

4.00pm to 6.00pm
I have a meeting with management where I represent the union side on the Joint Consultative Committee. After years of working in further education, I took on the position of branch convener of the Scottish Further and Higher Education Association. The meeting lasts nearly 2 hours and some progress is made on a range of issues. I feel that we really protect staff interests and contribute positively to a better way forward in the college. Spending time at the JCC means that time normally available for administration is lost. Very often course/divisional administration is slotted into time between classes or consumes non-contact time or lunch/break time.

Evening
On my return home and after a meal, I sit down to marking for tomorrow. – and this can last all evening. If I do not spend this time at home, then I cannot provide the feedback to students that is needed. I also plan the next day and try to prioritise the known tasks which are invariably pushed to one side by the necessities thrown up during the day.

I do not teach every hour of every day. A full time lecturer teaches 24 hours out of a 35 hour week, but I am a Curriculum Leader and now teach 18-20 hours with the other 4-6 hours for promoted post duties. In my position this involves course development and administration at Higher National level and cross-divisional responsibility for quality and moderation. No matter how it is worked out, a day is never long enough!