

Recommended Minimum Information Services Staffing Levels

Table 6 Revised

A number of factors determine the level of staffing required to provide learners with responsive library resource and information services. Table 6...gives the base allocations needed to provide the information services essential to the facilitation of resource-based learning and information access.

...The distribution of library support staff time between different types of support staff should be determined by schools after consideration of school needs.¹

Learning for the future: developing information services in schools, 1993, p.65

1. Background Information

Since the publication of *Learning for the future: developing information services in schools (LFTF)* 2nd edition in 1993², school leaders and teacher librarians have referred to *Table 6: Recommended minimum information services centre staffing* as a guideline for staffing levels in school libraries³. Table 6 from LFTF was informed by data generated from *A Select survey of school library resource centres in Australia* published in 1992.

Jointly commissioned by the Australian School Library Association [ASLA] and Australian Library and Information Association [ALIA] in 2010, the *Learning in a changing world series* was published by ACER Press⁴. The five titles in the series were designed to update the recommendations in LFTF and addressed the core areas to be considered for 21st century learning. Due to the deadline for publication and subsequent lack of time to gather data, Table 6 in LFTF was not updated, although the steering committee discussed the desirability of doing this.

The School Library Coalition, formed in 2015, prompted renewed discussion about staffing levels in school libraries. By the end of 2018, there was a consensus from the executive committees of ALIA Schools and ASLA that it was time to revise Table 6. Subsequently, a joint working party was formed with equal representation and the inclusion of a co-opted expert.

2. Rationale for Revising Table 6

In the 21st century school libraries are expected to provide quality services, effective resourcing and relevant skill development for all learners in their community. To achieve these goals, it is essential that school libraries are well staffed. There is extensive documentation that well-staffed and resourced school libraries have a significant positive effect on student learning outcomes. An exemplary school library is underpinned by professionally qualified library staff using their knowledge, core skills and expertise to support the learning and teaching as well as to provide for recreational reading.

The revised Table 6 provides a guide for schools when making decisions about staffing their libraries.

3. Process for Revising Table 6

The aim of the ASLA-ALIA Revised Table 6 Working Party was to update school library staffing levels, in line with the needs of the school library within its educational setting in 2020 and beyond.

Work commenced in February 2019 by systematically investigating information relevant to the revision. Monthly meetings occurred. The following steps were undertaken:

¹ ASLA & ALIA (1993). *Learning for the future: developing information services in schools*. 2nd edition, p.65. Carlton South, Vic: Curriculum Corporation.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid, p.68

⁴ ASLA & ALIA (2010). *Learning in a changing world series*. Camberwell, Vic.: ACER Press.

- search for recommendations for numbers of support staff in Australian schools which included contact with other professional associations, in particular, Science and Food Studies
- global search for recommendations about teacher librarian staff in school libraries which included IASL, IFLA, AASL and in Canada
- investigate national work agreements for teachers mainly in WA, NSW, SA and Queensland with little evidence found
- understand the formula for the original table which resulted in the location of the document titled, *A Select survey of school library resource centres in Australia* which was published in 1992⁵ and contact tracing of former working party members; it was difficult to work out the formula from this document
- establish that separate figures were required for the primary school and secondary school settings and that the table be extended to reflect increased school populations
- review the ACARA information about student-teacher ratios
- construct and disseminate a survey on staffing in school libraries which was delivered in two stages first to ASLA and ALIA members and then to broader audiences via assistance from the School Library Coalition
- conduct an analysis of the staffing survey to identify trends and prepare a report titled *ALIA Schools and ASLA Information services report: staffing in Australian school libraries*; it was deemed that the survey could only be a snapshot as there were insufficient participants to provide survey rigour. The staffing survey and findings are documented in the above-named report⁶
- identify that the ACARA information about student-teacher ratios would be the most relevant method to revise Table 6 and mathematical formulae were applied
- search for a way that updates the support staff hours; however, as no documentation was available the decision was made to keep the existing figures
- prepare accompanying notes that outline the revision of Table 6

4. Conclusion

In the intervening decades from the publication of LFTF, teaching staff student ratios have improved: in 1993 the ratio in primary schools was one teacher per 18.7 students, whilst in secondary schools it was one teacher per 13 students⁷. The 2016 data from ACARA indicates that in primary schools the ratio is one teacher to 15.2 students and in secondary it is one teacher to 12.1⁸.

The student-teacher ratio is calculated as the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) students per FTE teaching staff. The figures used to revise Table 6 are from the ACARA Table 1.12 which summarises average student-teacher ratios in Australia in 2016 across the three school sectors. It is important to note that the ratios do not take into account ... *the administrative or specialist duties undertaken by teaching staff, such as non-teaching principals and deputy principals, teacher librarians, careers advisers and counsellors, and subject head teachers in secondary schools. These factors help to explain the consistently higher than average student-teacher ratios in primary than secondary schooling.*⁹

The revision of Table 6 in LFTF seeks to ensure that the recommendations for library staff are in keeping with the trend towards the overall improvement in teaching staff to student ratios.

The ASLA-ALIA Revised Table 6 Working Party relied on the 2016 ACARA *National report on schooling in Australia* for its student-teacher ratios and the application of these ratios¹⁰.

⁵ ASLA/ALIA (School Library Section). (1992). *A Select survey of school library resource centres in Australia*. n.p.: ASLA/ALIA (School Library Section) with the support of ACLIS.

⁶ ALIA/ASLA (2020). *ALIA Schools and ASLA Information services report: staffing in Australian school libraries*. Canberra, ACT: ALIA/ASLA

⁷ *Learning for the Future*. 2nd edition. p.68.

⁸ ACARA (2016). *National report on schooling in Australia*, p. 22. Canberra: ACARA.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

5. Table 6 Revised: Recommended minimum information services centre staffing

6.1 Primary School

Student Population	Total Teaching Staff (including admin.)	Teacher Librarian (Full-time Equivalent)	Support Staff (hours per week)
46	3	0.25	7
76	5	0.37	10
106	7	0.49	13
137	9	0.62	16
152	10	0.74	19
182	12	0.86	21
213	14	0.98	25
228	15	1.11	29
258	17	1.23	33
350	23	1.48	38
441	29	1.72	46
547	36	1.97	52
654	43	2.21	59
760	50	2.46	67
866	57	2.71	76
973	64	2.95	84
1094	72	3.20	92
1201	79	3.44	101
1307	86	3.69	109
1429	94	3.94	117
1550	102	4.18	126
1672	110	4.43	134
1794	118	4.67	143
1900	125	4.92	151
2022	133	5.17	159
2128	140	5.41	168
2250	148	5.66	176
2356	155	5.90	184
2478	163	6.15	192
2584	170	6.40	200

6.2 Secondary School

Student Population	Total Teaching Staff (including admin.)	Teacher Librarian (Full-time Equivalent)	Support Staff (hours per week)
39	3	0.21	7
65	5	0.32	10
91	7	0.43	13
117	9	0.54	16
130	10	0.64	19
156	12	0.75	21
182	14	0.86	25
195	15	0.96	29
221	17	1.07	33
299	23	1.28	38
377	29	1.50	46
468	36	1.71	52
559	43	1.93	59
650	50	2.14	67
741	57	2.35	76
832	64	2.57	84
936	72	2.78	92
1027	79	3.00	101
1118	86	3.21	109
1222	94	3.42	117
1326	102	3.64	126
1430	110	3.85	134
1534	118	4.07	143
1625	125	4.28	151
1729	133	4.49	159
1820	140	4.71	168
1924	148	4.92	176
2015	155	5.14	184
2119	163	5.35	192
2210	170	5.56	200
2314	178	5.78	208
2405	185	5.99	216
2509	193	6.21	224
2600	200	6.42	232
2704	208	6.63	240
2795	215	6.85	248
2899	223	7.06	256
2990	230	7.28	264
3094	238	7.49	272
3185	245	7.70	280
3289	253	7.92	288
3380	260	8.13	296
3484	268	8.35	304
3575	275	8.56	312

Notes

- These figures are based on the following ratios of teaching staff to students (teaching staff = all qualified teaching staff including the education administration and support staff) as per ACARA:
 - primary school – one teacher per 15.2 students
 - secondary school – one teacher per 12.1 students

The allocations should cater for special needs as, in practice, the ratio varies for schools with special circumstances, mixed primary and secondary schools and in schools where there are large numbers of senior school students.
- The figures do not include time spent by teacher librarians as timetabled classroom teachers in a subject area.
- Where there are more than two teacher librarians in a secondary school or more than 1.2 full time equivalent in a primary school, one should have a position of leadership.
- Where staffing levels are not met, reduced levels in services will result; learning and teaching options will be diminished.

6. ALIA and ASLA Joint Policy Statements

- *Statement on Library and Information Services in Schools*
- *Statement on Information Literacy*
- *Statement on School Library Resource Provision*
- *Statement on School Libraries and Information and Communication Technologies*
- *Statement on School Library Resource Centre Funding*
- *Statement on Teacher Librarians in Australia*
- *Statement on Teacher Librarian Qualifications*

7. Glossary

- AASL: American Association of School Librarians
- ACARA: Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority
- ALIA: Australian Library and Information Association
- ASLA: Australian School Library Association
- FTE allotment: total time fraction for which a staff member is in paid employment at the school e.g. 1.0FTE or 0.6FTE
- IASL: International Association of School Librarianship
- IFLA: International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions
- Support staff: paid employees who are not paid as teachers
- Teacher librarian: person who holds dual qualifications in the fields of education and librarianship

8. References

ACARA (2016). *National report on schooling in Australia*. Canberra: ACARA.

ALIA/ASLA (2020). *ALIA Schools and ASLA Information services report: staffing in Australian school libraries*. Canberra, ACT: ALIA/ASLA.

ASLA/ALIA (School Library Section). (1992). *A Select survey of school library resource centres in Australia*. n.p.: ASLA/ALIA (School Library Section) with the support of ACLIS.

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ASLA & ALIA (2010). *Learning in a changing world series*. Camberwell, Vic.: ACER Press.

ASLA-ALIA Revised Table 6 Working Party

- Anne Girolami, ALIA Chair
- Anne Plowman, ALIA
- Kate Reid, ASLA
- Sandra Ryan, co-opted expert
- Robin Zeidler, ASLA