



Maintaining a Healthy Work-Life Balance

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Introduction

“How many of academic administrators have answered emails after hours?”

“How many have worked weekends to meet deadlines?”

“How many feel technology has made work easier, but somehow also made work never-ending?”

WHO ARE ACADEMIC ADMINISTRATORS?

Roles and Functions

Academic administrators are the backbone of higher education—connecting **people**, **processes**, and **policy** to advance institutional goals.

EXAMPLES OF ACADEMIC ADMINISTRATORS



Deans



Heads of Departments



Registrars



Programme Coordinators



Academic Advisors



Quality Assurance Officers



Admissions Administrators



Research Coordinators



Student Affairs Leaders

KEY ROLES AND FUNCTIONS



1 STRATEGIC ROLE

- Implement institutional goals and priorities
- Drive innovation and continuous improvement
- Policy development and execution
- Manage change initiatives and institutional projects



2 ACADEMIC SUPPORT ROLE

- Support and develop faculty
- Curriculum coordination and improvement
- Class scheduling and academic planning
- Ensure accreditation and quality compliance



3 STUDENT-CENTERED ROLE

- Handle student inquiries and concerns
- Support retention and engagement initiatives
- Promote student success and wellbeing
- Foster an inclusive and supportive environment



4 ADMINISTRATIVE ROLE


- Budget planning and financial management
- Reporting and compliance
- Organize and lead meetings
- Documentation and records management
- HR coordination and staff support




5 TECHNOLOGICAL ROLE

Increasingly expected to:

 Adopt AI systems and emerging technologies

 Analyze institutional data for informed decision-making

 Manage digital transformation and process automation

 Oversee online learning systems and digital platforms

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Academic administrators connect strategy with execution—ensuring teaching, learning, research and operations thrive.



THE REALITY OF THE LIFE OF ACADEMIC ADMINISTRATORS

Leading institutions. Supporting people. Solving problems. Every day.



“Jack of all trades”?

Academic administrators are expected to be strategic leaders, problem-solvers, tech adopters, counsellors, and operational managers—all at once.



Healthy versus Unhealthy Balance

Healthy Balance

- Structured work hours
- Defined communication boundaries
- Taking breaks and annual leave
- Rest prioritization
- Protected personal time
- Stress management habits
- Proactive planning
- Intentional tech use

Unhealthy Balance

- Constant overtime
- Responding to emails at midnight
- Skipping leave, working during (sick) leave
- Poor sleep
- Neglecting family, friends
- Constant stress
- Reactive work style
- Tech overload



Why Work-Life Balance is Becoming Harder



1 "ALWAYS-ON" CULTURE

Work follows us everywhere. Notifications never stop. There is no off switch.



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Chronic stress
Burnout
Reduced recovery time



2 TECHNOLOGY PARADOX

Technology connects and empowers us—yet it also overloads, distracts, and creates more work.



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Information overload
Constant context switching
Lower productivity



3 AI ANXIETY

Rapid AI advancement brings excitement—and fear. Will AI replace me? Change my role? Make my skills obsolete?



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Uncertainty
Impostor syndrome
Reduced resilience and wellbeing



4 EMOTIONAL LABOUR

Managing emotions—ours and others—has become invisible, but it's exhausting. Especially in remote settings.



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Emotional exhaustion
Compassion fatigue
Drained energy



5 ROLE OVERLOAD

We wear many hats with more expectations, fewer resources, and constant urgency.



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Overwhelm
Decision fatigue
Lower quality of work



6 BLURRED BOUNDARIES

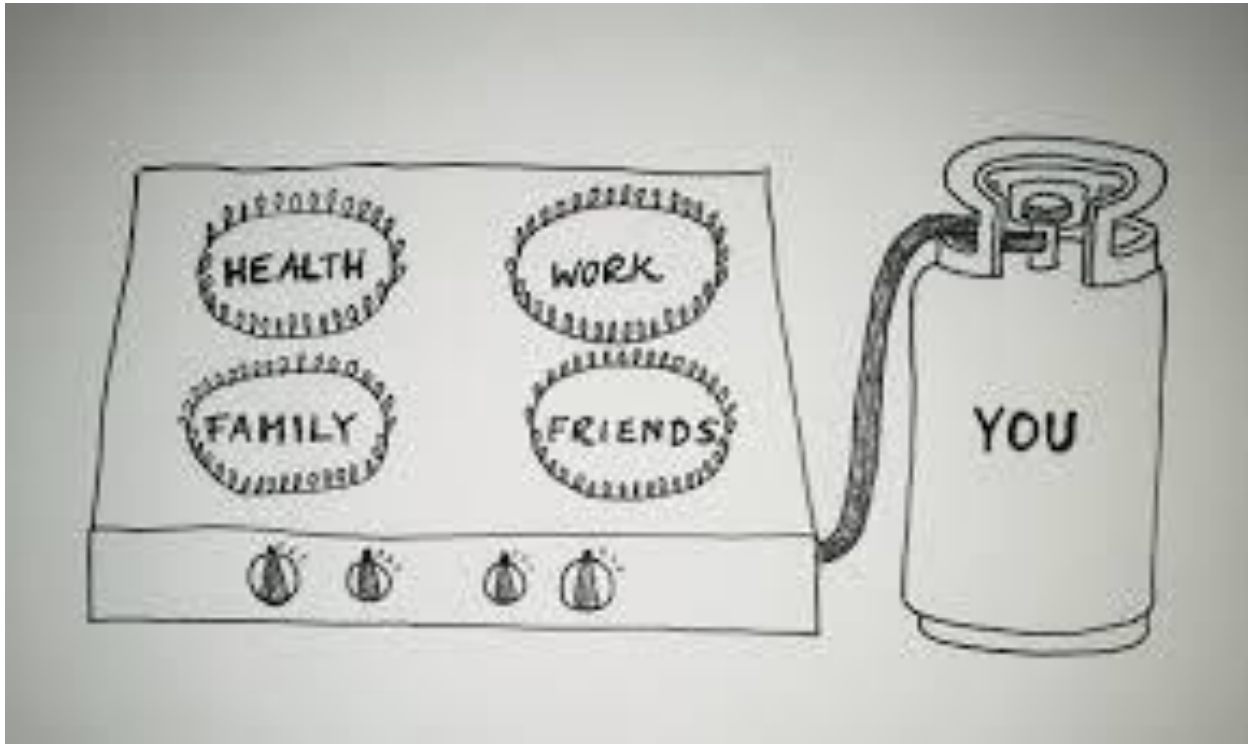
Work and personal life blend together. Boundaries are hard to set—and easy to lose.



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Less time for self
Relationship strain
Identity confusion

The Four Burner's Theory



Life /You = Work+Family+Friends+Health

“Which burners are academic administrators most likely to turn off?”

AI as a Tool for Better Work-Life Balance?

Examples of AI Tools in Action



Microsoft Copilot



Google Workspace AI tools



OpenAI ChatGPT

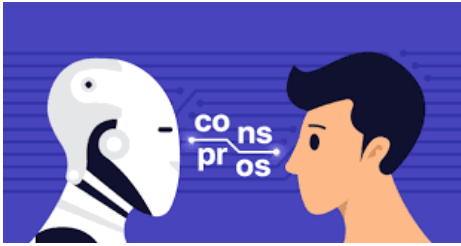


Zoom AI meeting summaries



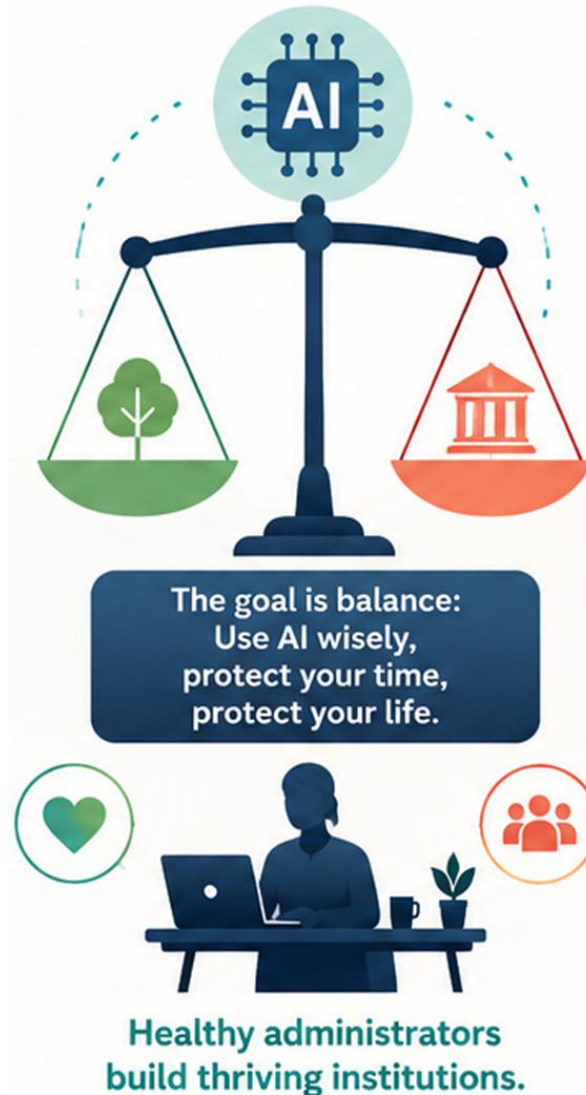
Grammarly writing support

AI as a Tool for Better Work-Life Balance?



	Pros (How AI can improve work-life balance)	Cons (How AI can harm work-life balance)
Time savings	Automates repetitive tasks	Expectations rise to do more work in less time
Productivity	Helps complete work faster	Increased productivity can lead to higher workloads
Flexibility	Enables remote work tools	Blurs boundaries between work and personal life
Stress reduction	Assists with planning, reminders, and decision support	Dependence on AI tools can create stress when unavailable
Skill support	Acts as a “co-pilot”	Relying too heavily on automation
Work distribution	Smart task allocation and prioritization	Increased monitoring and surveillance
Accessibility	Assists people with disabilities or limited resources	Digital divide – exclusion of those without access
Work quality	Improves accuracy and reduces errors	Pressure to maintain AI-level output quality

AI as a Tool for Better Work-Life Balance?



Practical Strategies to improve work-life balance

Academic administrators have the power to protect work-life balance

1 Set Boundaries



Define work hours



Avoid unnecessary after-hours communication



Delegate effectively

“ You do not have to solve everything personally.

2 Use Technology Intentionally



Not every message needs an immediate response.

TIPS

- Use tools to automate repetitive tasks
- Turn off non-urgent notifications

3 Prioritize High-Impact Work



Focus on strategic tasks



Say no to tasks that don't align with priorities



Your impact > Your inbox

4 Protect Health



Exercise



Sleep



Nutrition



Mental health support



Take leave



Rest is productive.

5 Build Supportive Teams



Healthy teams reduce burnout and improve outcomes.

- Foster open communication
- Share workload
- Recognize and appreciate
- Support growth and well-being

6 Advocate Institutional Policies



Flexible work arrangements



Mental health support



Realistic workloads



Clear policies that respect human limits

Institutional Responsibility

Work-life balance is a shared responsibility

1



Reduce unnecessary bureaucracy



Simplify processes, eliminate redundant approvals, and focus on what truly matters.

2



Provide adequate staffing



Ensure the right number of people with the right skills to meet institutional goals sustainably.

3



Train staff on AI tools



Invest in training and upskilling to help staff work smarter, save time, and boost confidence.

4



Promote wellness policies



Prioritize mental and physical well-being through accessible wellness programs and support systems.

5



Encourage flexible work practices



Offer flexibility in where, when, and how work gets done—supporting better balance and outcomes.

6



Normalize rest



Recognize that rest is not a reward—it's essential. A well-rested community drives excellence. ❤️

Conclusion – Key take-home messages

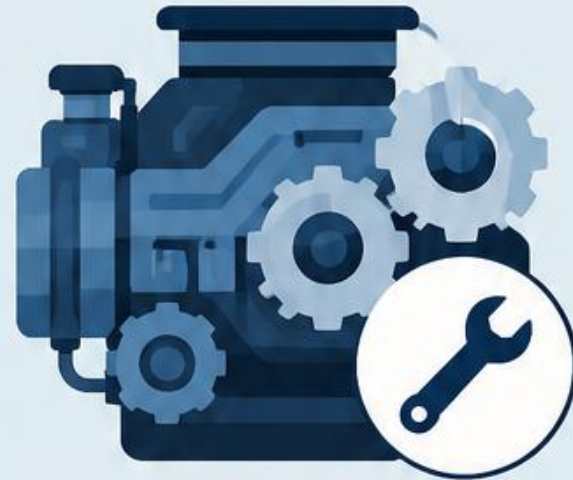
01



Healthy academic administrators are better positioned to lead change, support academics and students, and implement innovation sustainably.

02

“Academic administrators are the engines that keep institutions moving—but even engines require maintenance.”



Conclusion – Key take-home messages

03



“ If institutional excellence requires administrators to sacrifice health and relationships, then the system itself needs redesign. ”

04

A healthy work-life balance for academic administrators starts with balance:

take care of yourself,
your team and institution –
creating a thriving academic
community.



*Thank
you*



Any questions?



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