COVID-19 WELLBEING SURVEY

UEB are asked to:

Note the results of the recent wellbeing survey

Approve the areas for action (paras 17-23)

Approve the proposed method of communication to staff (para 24-25)

Background

1. The working patterns which the University has been forced to adopt since the coronavirus outbreak are impacting on staff in ways we do not fully yet understand. Whether staff be working on campus, working at home or furloughed, with considerable uncertainty about what the future of work will require, if we are to support people in their wellbeing and effectiveness, we need to understand more about the impact on people.

2. A survey was made available to all staff from 2 Jun – 16 Jun. The survey was designed quickly to provide a channel for understanding the attitudes of staff to their working situation, and enable the management response to be tuned to those views.

3. A total of 1679 responses were received. The basic data shows that respondents were:

    a. 59.7% female, compared the University population of 50.6% female

    b. 5.8% BAME, compared to the University population of 9.6% BAME

    c. 50.2% from the MSA job family, compared to the University population of 39.6%

    d. 47.6% having caring responsibilities, 61% of whom were female

4. This report analyses the responses to the survey and proposes actions to reply to concerns raised. Data on the responses to questions is at Appendix 1.

Wellbeing

5. The Office for National Statistics undertakes weekly surveys to measure national wellbeing. We used the same 1-10 scale where 1 is low and 10 is high.

	University	UK
How satisfied are you with your life?	6.6	7.1
The things you do in your life are worthwhile?	7.2	7.5
How happy do you feel?	6.6	7.1
How anxious did you feel yesterday?	4.6	3.9

6. Further analysis does not show marked differences among staff groups regarding satisfaction. Males score slightly lower than females on average; older staff are more satisfied with their life; grades 2-5 are less likely to feel that the things they do in their lives are worthwhile; staff

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in the MSA job family score highest across all groups. Without longitudinal trends in this data, it is difficult to see that there are specific actions which can address these issues which are both work and home-life related.

7. The measure of anxiety shows a slightly higher difference. Younger staff, those with caring responsibilities, female staff and those in the E&R job family all show higher levels of anxiety. Some of the highest levels of anxiety are shown by female staff in the E&R job family who have caring responsibilities. This perhaps reinforces concerns expressed in the wider sector about the impact of the pandemic on the performance/careers of female academic staff.

My Manager

8. We have relied heavily on the relationship between managers and staff to adapt to these new working patterns and to support staff who will have had to make difficult adjustments to both their home and working life. Overall staff's attitudes to the way their managers have supported them has been extremely positive, with only 3-9%[1] of staff disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with the statements. The high proportion of 'strongly agree' responses indicates that we should be extremely proud of how our managers have responded in these unprecedented times.

Communications

9. Given how negative staff often are about communication, these results look positive. 60% of staff are positive about the communication received. It is the E&R job family who appear to feel less well informed (proportionately twice as many) where a consistent theme in the comments is that students have been informed about issues but not the staff who teach them.

10. There were positive comments about the Vice-Chancellor's video from people who found it reassuring. Some of the areas for improvement include shorter emails, clearer messaging with detail about what this means (the message on unfunded research and the forthcoming VE scheme were quoted). Some of this feedback has already been acted upon (the weekly message from the Vice-Chancellor) and the Communications team have analysed the feedback further and are proposing a number of improvements including: more video content; a repository for all email messages; continuation of the Town Hall meetings and updated web-pages on the next academic year.

Working from home

11. Overall a very positive response from staff who have now established routines and appreciate the flexibility that such working patterns provide. This is particularly true for staff with caring responsibilities. 27% of staff said that they could do all of their work from home, with over 70% saying that they could do most or all of their work from home. Although for some, their wellbeing and effectiveness has improved, for a similar number, it hasn't. Common themes include the difficulty of managing workload (without a commute to bookend the working day), the lack of social interaction and childcare responsibilities. Although the E&R workforce appear most impacted (again proportionately twice as much), this effect is not seen in those with caring responsibilities.

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[1] This varies by question and there is a slightly higher proportion of such responses in the E&R job family.

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12. When asked what would improve the homeworking experience, the following words/phrases were most frequent.

Phrase/word	Mentions
Computer/Laptop/Technology	203
Screen(s)	91
Chair	76
Children/Childcare	72

Returning to Campus

13. We asked a very simple question about people's comfort with the idea of returning to campus. 39.3% disagreed with this statement; 40.5% agreed. Inspecting this further, we find that:

   a. Female staff are more likely to be concerned about returning than male staff. There appears to be some correlation with caring responsibilities

   b. Younger staff (<45) are more likely to be concerned about returning than older staff

   c. Staff identifying as BAME are more likely to be concerned about returning (50% disagree) compared to white staff (38%)

   d. Staff in the MSA job family are more likely to be concerned about returning than the other job families. This group is more likely to be female, hence correlation with the first observation

14. When asked which were the main issues that concerned people (they could mark up to three), the results were:
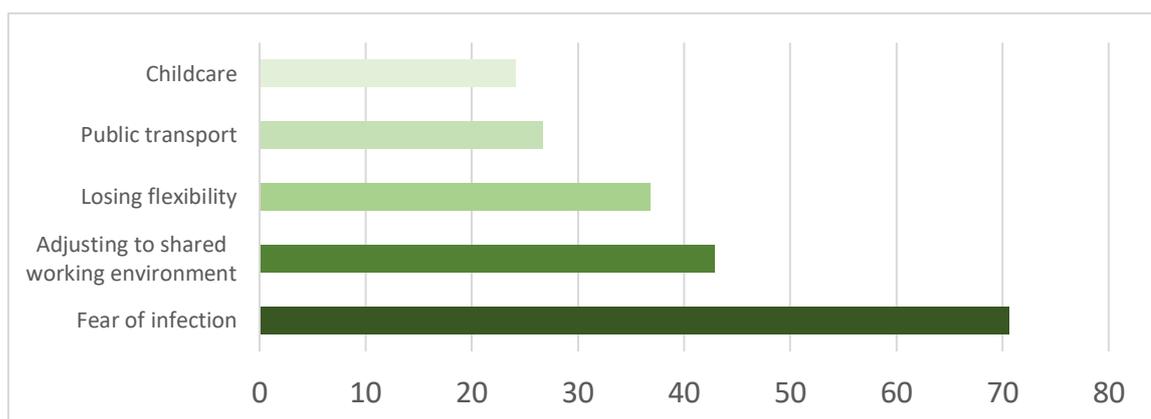
15. Reviewing the comments on each of these identified a number of useful themes:

   a. More communication about the plans for campus

   b. The need for continued flexibility in working patterns to provide for caring responsibilities

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c. Reducing the number of people on campus to reduce the likelihood of infection

d. Educating others about social distancing and etiquette to reduce the risks of infection

e. Provision of face coverings for public transport

f. The need for safe routes around campus, and safe protocols for communal areas such as toilets and kitchens

g. Regular cleaning and provision of hand sanitiser

h. Online delivery

i. Investment in remote working technology and rotas to allow partial homeworking

The Effects of Furlough, Homeworking and Working on Campus

16. Staff still working on campus are, in general, more satisfied with their life, happier and feel what they are doing is worthwhile. Furthermore their anxiety levels are lower. This data points to a need for that campus connection. Although we might have expected staff on furlough to be affected in their wellbeing, the differences are not statistically significant compared to staff who are homeworking.

17. Regarding manager support and communications, there appear to be no significant differences between these groups. However, attitudes regarding return to campus show that furloughed staff have the least concerns about returning. Those staff whose work is usually carried out more remotely have the highest levels of anxiety, a group we will need to target with communication and reassurance.

Proposed Actions

18. A number of the actions expected to respond to this survey are already underway, however there appears to be a thirst for more information about, often, very practical issues. The following are proposed as areas we need to address

Fear of returning to campus due to infection.

19. The University is following Government guidelines and taking the health and wellbeing of staff very seriously. The work being undertaken on making buildings COVID-Safe, working with public transport providers etc. needs to be communicated in some detail. The video being produced is a good start, but now it is important to make this more localised, with managers firming up plans for their own teams and workspaces.

20. It is also proposed that a new hard copy guide to 'the way we work on campus' is developed which contains protocols for everything from face coverings, self-cleaning and the appropriate use of toilets, to the suitable language for challenging people who fail to follow guidelines.

21. The concerns regarding the impact of the pandemic on individuals who identify as BAME have been well reported, and are impacting the University. This priority topic could be considered by the recently announced Race Equality Committee.

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<u>Working from home.</u>

22. Generation of policies and guidance for home-working is relatively simple given that such documents have existed for some years. We need to refresh these and make decisions on the provision of resources and provide decision tools for managers.

23. More important is the need to understand how the University can use this new-found freedom to give staff more flexibility and make better use of the scarce resource of campus space. The clichéd 'new normal' for the University could include this as a longer-term working model, where many staff work the majority of their time off-campus.

<u>Flexible working.</u>

24. Allied to the above, we have seen a move away from the '9-5' for many people. While this needs to be carefully managed, and it is not suitable for all, providing such flexibility can ease issues such as childcare (and perhaps in the longer-term, the gender pay gap) while providing for a more flexible workforce which can respond to peaks and troughs of need. This is not simply a policy, it is a culture change in the attitude of managers.

25. Under this area, we also need to identify, further, the issues regarding female academic staff to ensure that no bias is built into career decisions which will have long-lasting effects.

Communication

26. Our experience with previous surveys is that staff prefer honesty in the results and a clear set of actions. It is proposed, therefore, that this paper is made available to staff following UEB approval.

27. If still appropriate, this survey could be run again in mid-Sept 2020 to provide further data to support a successful next academic year.

Richard Brooks

Director of HR

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Group	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
My manager	My manager is accessible	25	53	128	705	757
My manager	My manager is supportive of my efforts to combine work/home commitments	21	42	220	537	842
My manager	I can rely on my manager to give me the support I need	51	100	247	572	696
My manager	My manager trusts me to do my job	19	33	105	512	996
My manager	My manager has taken an interest in my wellbeing	50	107	239	564	707
Communications	I feel well informed about the University's response	95	239	318	809	210
Communications	The communications I have received have been helpful	78	210	389	801	193
Communications	I know how to access support if I need it	40	149	336	878	265
Working from home	I have access to the necessary resources	47	211	170	726	318
Working from home	My wellbeing has improved as a consequence of working from home	124	288	460	324	273
Working from home	My effectiveness has improved as a consequence of working from home	138	327	548	263	191
Return	I am comfortable with the idea of returning to campus	236	408	330	471	194

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All Questions

| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |

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