

Subject: Staff Survey 2022 Results

Dear Colleagues

We are writing to share with you the results of the 2022 Staff Survey. We carry out a staff survey every two years to understand staff experience of working at the University, and it is an important barometer of culture, morale and staff satisfaction.

1827 people completed the survey via e-mail links from Peachy Mondays, the published QR code, and 'Kiosk' laptops. This equated to a 51% completion rate. This was lower than the 60% rate that was achieved in the 2020 survey but above the 38% rate in 2018. The reasons for this will be explored to try to ensure a higher response rate the next time the survey is run.

2022 Survey Headline Results

Overall the results broadly indicate continuing high levels of staff satisfaction with their experience of working at the University. As this [summary of the results of each question](#) indicates, a variety of areas received a **positive response** (Agree or Tend to Agree) **from most participants** (over 85%), as follows:

Job Satisfaction and Pride in the University

- The University is a good place to work (94%)
- Generally, I enjoy my work (93%)
- I feel valued by students and others I provide a service to (88%)
- I feel proud to work for the University (91%)
- I would recommend the University to a friend as a place to work (87%)
- I would recommend the University to a friend as a place to study (93%)

Leadership and Strategy

- SMT manage and lead the University well (86%)
- SMT are focused on meeting the needs of students/service users/ customers (90%)
- SMT set out a clear vision of where the University is headed (88%)
- I identify with the commitments set out in Aberdeen 2040 (91%)

Feeling Valued and Supported

- I am satisfied with the support I get from my work colleagues (88%)
- I am given the opportunity to make decisions about how I do my job (87%)
- My team leader/line manager/immediate supervisor...
 - is approachable (94%)
 - would be supportive in a personal crisis (94%)
 - respects and values me (90%)

Health and Safety

- I feel physically safe in my working environment on campus (96%)

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

While any level below 100% represents room for improvement, the following questions scored above 90%:

- I am aware of the University's Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy (97%)
- I am not currently being harassed or bullied at work (97%)
- I have not felt discriminated at work in the last 12 months (91%)

There were some areas that received a **less positive response** (below 65%) as follows:

Workload

- I find my current workload too much and I am struggling to cope (46% agree with this)
- To keep up with my workload, I frequently work more than my contracted hours (59% agree with this)

Pay

- I feel fairly paid for the work I do (57%)
- Overall, I feel the University offers a good pay and reward package (64%)

Communication and Staff Involvement

- On the whole, the different parts of the University communicate effectively with each other (48%)
- I am confident my ideas or suggestions will be listened to (59%)
- I am confident I will get feedback on my ideas or suggestions (60%)
- I feel there is good co-operation between different Schools and Directorates (57%)

Interdisciplinary Spaces

- Our physical spaces enable interdisciplinary exchange and innovation (58%)

External Benchmarking

Unlike Capita, which conducted the survey in 2020, Peachy Mondays has not yet run sufficient surveys in the HE sector to provide external benchmarking. We have, however, been able to assemble some benchmarking data which, while needing to be heavily caveated given the differing uses of 4 or

5 point scales in different universities, and occasional small variations in wording, provides some insight into our results in comparison with others. The comparators are two other research intensive Scottish HEIs, plus sector and Russell Group averages and the benchmark averages that Capita provided for the results of the 2020 survey. [The summary of this external benchmarking analysis](#) indicates that, with the exception of workload, our 2022 survey results are better than any of the individual or aggregate benchmark results, and often very substantially so. This means that just as with the 2020 results we can be confident that the 2022 staff survey results indicate levels of staff satisfaction and morale that continue to be much better than are generally being experienced elsewhere in the sector.

Comparisons with the results of the 2020 Staff Survey

The Staff Survey Steering Group took the decision to minimise changes between the 2022 and the 2020 surveys to maximise the validity of the comparison of the results. [This summary of the comparison of the results](#) shows that in general the results are somewhat lower than in 2020 across the survey (but still much closer to the results of the 2020 survey than the 2018 survey).

In terms of **improvements on the 2020 results** (that are statistically significant):

Workload

- 5% fewer staff are frequently working more than their contracted hours to keep up with their workload (59% compared with 64% in 2020).

Stress

- There has been a 4% reduction in staff who feel always or frequently stressed at work, and a 2% increase in staff who never feel stressed at work.

Annual Review

- 9% more staff (74%) have had an annual review, probationary review or clinical appraisal in the last 12 months, with 5% more staff (75%) finding their review helpful.

In terms of **declines on the 2020 results** the following stand out:

Pay

- -15% Overall, I feel the University offers a good pay and reward package
- -13% I feel fairly paid for the work I do

Managing Change

- -13% I think things will improve within the University in the next 12 months
- -12% I have seen some positive changes within the University in the last 12 months
- -9% Generally, change within the University is managed well

Communication and Staff Involvement

- -9% SMT listen to and respond to the views of staff
- -7% The University's culture enables an exchange of ideas across intellectual areas and organisational structures
- 8 out of the 9 questions in Section 11 (Communication and Staff Involvement) saw declines of between 5% and 11% (with the 11% fall relating to whether during a period of change, feedback is listened to and acted upon).

Interdisciplinary Spaces

- -9% Our physical spaces enable interdisciplinary exchange and innovation

Leadership

- -6% SMT manage and lead the University well
- -7% My School/Directorate is managed and led well

Health and Wellbeing

- -6% I feel the University cares for my health and wellbeing, including my mental health
- -5% Our processes create a caring environment that is alert to cultural differences

Initial Interpretation of Results of the 2022 Survey

In light of the results of the 2022 Survey, the external benchmarking and the comparison with the 2020 survey, we offer the following initial thoughts on the results of the 2022 survey.

- 1) While the results are broadly slightly below those of the very strong results of the 2020 survey, they are nevertheless very strong in comparison with the 2018 survey results and with external benchmarks. **Job satisfaction and pride in the University** remain at very high levels, for example, and colleagues continue to feel **valued and supported** by each other and their line manager.
- 2) Confidence in the University's **strategy** remains high (91% again identify with the commitments set out in Aberdeen 2040), and confidence in **SMT's leadership** remains high though not quite as high as in 2020, with a 9% fall in the question relating to whether SMT listen to and respond to the views of staff (74%). Confidence in School and Directorate leadership also remains high at 80%.

- 3) **Workload**, which the 2020 survey identified as a major concern and which has been the focus of concerted action over the past two years, remains a major concern. A large and higher proportion of staff report in 2022 that they find their current workload too much and are struggling to cope. It is, however, welcome that a smaller proportion report frequently working more than their contracted hours than in 2020, and a smaller proportion of staff feel always or frequently stressed at work. The same proportion of staff (71%) feel they have a good work life balance, and while this proportion is still too low, it is significantly ahead of the benchmark figures.

These results would suggest that efforts to address workloads have had some partial success but this area will need to continue to remain a priority focus. The Workload Review Group will reconvene to consider the results of the survey in detail with a view to developing further target actions to address workloads.

- 4) **Pay and reward package** have emerged as a concern in the 2022 survey, which is unsurprising given the cost-of-living crisis, below inflation pay rises in the sector and changes to the USS pension scheme.
- 5) While the fall from 11% to 9% in those who have felt discriminated against in the last 12 months is welcome, it is not a statistically significant improvement, and **Equality, diversity and inclusion** will need to remain a priority area of focus. The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee will consider the results in detail across the protected characteristics and develop detailed insights into the results to inform future actions.
- 6) **Managing change, communication and staff involvement** have emerged more broadly in the 2022 survey as areas of concern both absolutely and relatively to the 2020 results. 'On the whole, the different parts of the University communicate effectively with each other' is now the lowest scoring question at 48% (a fall of 9%) and co-operation between different Schools and Directorates (57%) could be improved. There is also scope to improve the perception by staff that their ideas or suggestions will be listened to (59%) and that they will get feedback on those ideas and suggestions (60%). We will need to develop actions in response to this.
- 7) Physical **interdisciplinary spaces** have emerged as an area of concern, following the return to campus working and the greater emphasis placed on interdisciplinarity under Aberdeen 2040. As we develop an Estates strategy and masterplan over the next 12 months under our new Director of Estates and Campus Services, addressing this feedback will need to be a key consideration.

These are just preliminary thoughts on the results of the staff survey, which will need to be refined in light of further analysis and discussion of the results in various forums across the University in the coming weeks and months.

Next steps

A detailed report of the results by School and Directorate is being prepared. The narrative comments from their staff will also be made available to Heads of School and Directors. Presentations of the results will be held in each School and Directorate, after which each School / Directorate will begin to develop an action plan to address the feedback provided through the staff survey.

At University level, Peachy Mondays will provide additional insights both into the numerical results and the narrative comments in due course. As well as holding discussions of the results at the Senior Management Team, with Heads of School and Directors and with the Campus Trade Unions, we will organise an online Open Session for all staff (on Monday 30 January 11:45-12:45) where we will discuss the results, test the validity of the initial interpretation of the results provided above, and explore together what the priority areas for action should be across the University. We will also ensure that the results are considered by relevant committees and groups such as the Workload Review Group, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee, Race Equality Strategy Group and the Health and Safety Committee.

It is pleasing to see that the results of the 2022 survey are largely very positive overall, especially when seen in the context of external benchmarking. At the same time the survey points to areas for the University as a whole, and individual Schools and Directorates, to focus on to improve everyone's experience of working at the University. We want to thank you once again for taking part in the survey and look forward to working together as a community to address the invaluable feedback that the survey provides.

Best wishes,

Karl and Tracey

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