

Summary of the 2020 staff survey

We would like to thank all those that took the time to complete the 2020 staff survey.

The staff survey was launched at the beginning of October for a period of two weeks but was extended for two more weeks as the completion rate was quite slow. The timing of the survey wasn't the best. It was anticipated that it would be after the annual review, but the delay in the review process to November in 2020 due to the pandemic forced the survey to run ahead of the review process in order to achieve completion. At the close the response rate for the 2020 staff survey was 74.5%, slightly down on last year (79%), and 0.5% below our target of 75%. At a gender level, the number of responses from women constituted 59% of women on the staff list, while 90% of men on the staff list responded and 10% of all respondents preferred not to indicate gender identity.

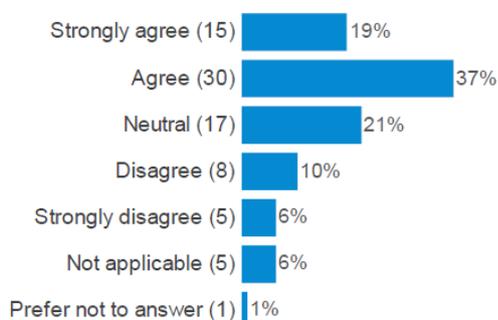
Interestingly, this year more comments were received in the survey than previous years. These comments have all been read and subsequent actions, either by the EDT or the Institute management are being considered and enacted.

Athena Swan at the Rowett: We are pleased to report that 80% of respondents were aware of the Athena Swan commitment at the Rowett and 94% of these understood what Athena Swan is trying to achieve in the Institute. 47% of respondents had taken the time to view the Institute's Athena Swan (AS) webpage containing the business cycle, annual report and survey summaries. The newsletter as a method of EDT communication continues to be well received, with 86% respondents feeling this promotes AS values. There were some very positive feedback comments about the AS content in the newsletter that we really appreciate, while comments suggesting improvements will also be taken on board.

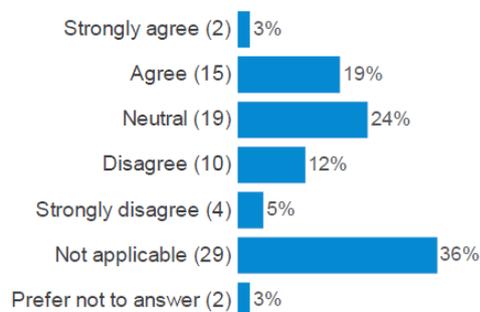
Work load and flexible working: 20% of respondents were not happy with their workload and 14% felt they were under employer driven pressure to work long hours. Teaching and administration are elements that are likely to contribute to the workload pressure, with 9% of staff feeling their workload involved too much of either of these aspects.

Recognition of workloads is important for staff, and although most staff (56%) agreed that they were recognised for their contributions in research, 16% disagreed, with 21% responding neutral. 21% and 17% of staff disagreed that they were recognised for contributions in Administration, Teaching with only 34% and 22% agreeing, respectively.

I am recognised for my contributions in (Research)



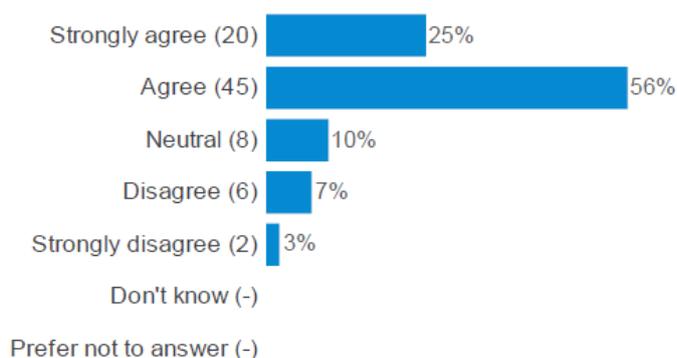
I am recognised for my contributions in (Teaching)



49% of staff agreed that successes and achievements were celebrated, with only 9% disagreeing although 41% responded as neutral which is not very positive. Comments on this aspect were wide ranging but the perception that recognition of activities needs to be improved within the Institute is accepted.

A reassuringly large number of staff responded that the Rowett has a supportive attitude to Flexible working (81% agree), and 61% of staff have a flexible working arrangement. There does still seem to be some variation among staff, perhaps dependent on line managers or workplace.

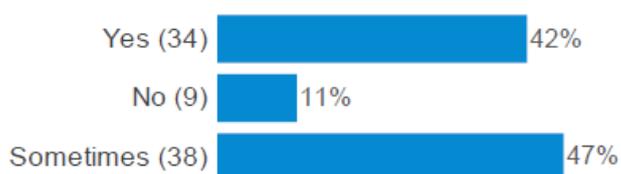
The Rowett has a supportive attitude to flexible working?



Communications to and from Management

In every staff survey, communication always appears to be received variably and this survey was no different. 42% of staff feel that communication is always effective, 47% only sometimes and 11% never.

Are communications both to and from staff and the management team at the Rowett Institute effective?



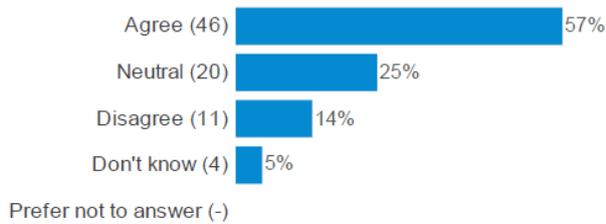
Some of the comments on this were particularly concerning, revealing a perception that communication has deteriorated further following the COVID-enforced split of staff working at home or still in the Institute. This seems particularly true of communication down from the top level of management who are perceived as being rather dissociated from the day-to-day work now. These comments were fed up to the IEC and institute wide 'all staff' meetings have now started.

Another way to improve this communication could be to advertise more widely the timings of all theme meetings (something the AS team are trying to facilitate) as many staff are unable to attend their own theme meetings, sometimes due to the current shift work pattern meaning that they are in the Institute, or that the meetings clash with teaching commitments. The variation in the regularity of meetings between themes was also noted and is being addressed. As far as possible, meetings should also avoid lunchtimes (in line with central University policy), not be more than 1 – 1.5hr and be at regular scheduled times, which would allow planning around them.

Promotions:

The number of staff with an understanding of the promotion process has increased since the Introduction of a seminar on this, with only 7% of staff stating they require training although 14% of staff disagreed that they understood the process. Since the promotion process changes frequently, and new staff are continually employed, updates are essential, and it is our intention to continue running these seminars every two years. Line-manager training on promotion opportunities for their staff is built into the new AS action plan. Only 20% of staff agreed that the promotion process was transparent and the large number of comments on this, and on perceived barriers to promotion, will be considered and fed onto HR where appropriate.

I have a good understanding of the promotion process and the associated criteria



Do you require training on the promotion process?



Equality and Diversity:

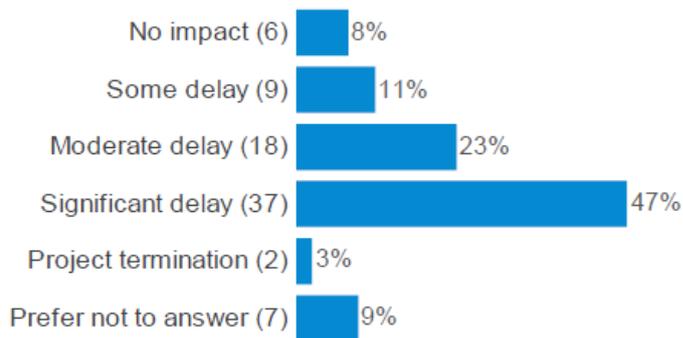
Reassuringly the vast majority (72%) of respondents felt there were no gender differences within the Rowett for promotion or career development (82%), or for access to lab or office space (88%) and administrative support (86%). 76% of people thought that the University promotes a positive culture in relation to Equality and Diversity, with only 4% disagreeing. This was also true within the Rowett although a slightly reduced number agreed (69%) and 20% had a neutral view (only 12% neutral with respect to the University).

46% of respondents have daily caring responsibilities, for children or elderly parents. Although most people decided that these responsibilities could be managed alongside their work, 14% commented that they were sometimes or often difficult to manage. These responsibilities obviously changed with the onset of COVID and children being at home for long periods. Although the enforced onset of home working has been appreciated by many, others found it isolating, and some comments indicated that workload expectations had not adjusted to take the enforced daytime care/teaching roles into account. WE would remind staff that the family support advisor is available for any questions staff may have regarding balancing caring commitments and work, for any caring roles (to support children or dependant adults). Line managers are also requested to ensure they are aware of caring issues in order that effective support can be offered.

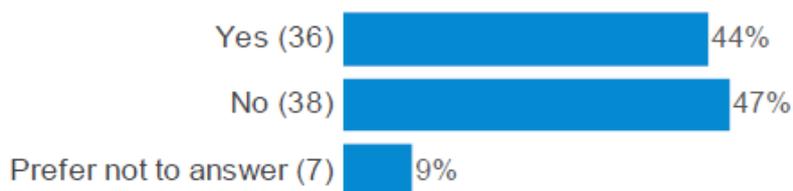
COVID-specific issues

This section was added to the survey to try and capture the impact of COVID on staff's work. As expected there were a variety of opinions although most staff report some delay in their research. 44% of staff also reported that their workload had increased, particularly in respect to teaching and administration.

What was the impact of closure of the building during lockdown on your research project(s)?



As a result of the Covid pandemic, has your workload increased?



A key positive aspect from some respondents has been the ability to work from home, although there was also a sense that this may have exacerbated a feeling of dissociation between PIs and staff/students who have been able to return to lab work.

37% of staff stated that their caring responsibilities had increased, with more men than women feeling this impacted on their work. A significant number of staff felt this would impact on publications and grant applications.

Most staff thought that the support for health and wellbeing had been good/OK. Communication from University management was mainly perceived as very good/excellent (36%) or good (38%) with 17% and 7% perceiving this as OK or poor respectively. Communication from Rowett Management was felt to be slightly worse – very good/excellent (20%), good (41%), OK (24%), poor 9%, very poor 4%. Details on bad practice and suggestions for improvement have been passed on to the IEC.

It is interesting that some of the online communication/training are perceived to be improvements, with training easier to fit in, although the reduction in interaction during training was a negative aspect. There was considerable appreciation of the speed with which the University rolled out Microsoft Teams, generally perceived as a good resource unlike blackboard. The Principal's meetings on Teams went down well, and the use of Teams for informal work place 'coffee meetings' was also appreciated by many respondents.

It is clear that there is a range of opinions on the impact of COVID not just on work but also the impact of COVID on staff health and wellbeing, with a large number of open comments posted. It was suggested that we should introduce a health and wellbeing mentor, which is being addressed by the EDT.