

# Staff Experience Survey: FAQs

## About the survey

### What is the University of Oxford Staff Experience Survey?

This Staff Experience Survey is a biennial staff survey covering the whole institution. It is designed to gather insight from our staff about their experience of working here so that we can take action to ensure that Oxford remains an attractive place to work and provides a work environment that allows staff to grow and flourish. The survey results will be made available for the whole institution and by division and department to enable appropriate actions to be taken at all levels.

### Why are we doing this survey?

We want to know about the experiences of individual members of staff so that we can identify areas where the University and departments might need to make changes in order to ensure the best possible experience for everyone.

Staff surveys are one of the most useful ways of gathering data to improve our working lives and the University overall – they provide an objective, quantitative and qualitative measure of staff engagement and experience at the University and department level. With the results, we can identify what is working well, so that we can do more of it, as well as the issues we need to address to help make positive changes.

All of the survey results will be analysed by different demographics and will inform important University-wide projects, including renewal of our institutional Athena Swan, Race Equality Charter Mark and the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index awards, and the work of the Race Equality Task Force: [edu.web.ox.ac.uk/equality-charters](https://edu.web.ox.ac.uk/equality-charters). Many departments also use the results to inform and monitor the impact of their Athena Swan action plans.

By running the survey every two years, we are building up a longitudinal dataset so that we can assess our performance over time and evaluate the impact of actions that we have taken.

### Shouldn't the survey be delayed until after COVID-19 crisis has settled down?

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a huge amount of disruption and we have thought very hard about the timing of the survey, already postponing it by a year. We recognise that people's experiences during the pandemic have been very different to the norm, so results of this survey may not be directly comparable with previous years. However, we also think that the extraordinary circumstances of the last year make it more important than ever to hear your views and be able to address those issues that matter most for staff. We also recognise that many colleagues are dealing with additional pressures at the moment and have refined the question set to reduce the time it will take to respond.

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## Responding to the survey

### Who is administering the survey?

People Insight, an independent, third party provider, is running the 2021 survey on our behalf. People Insight are employee engagement specialists with extensive experience in running employee surveys with other organisations across the UK and internationally. Working with People Insight will bring several advantages, including:

- Enhanced data protection - all survey responses will go directly to them and be deidentified before any data is shared with us;
- A simpler, more streamlined process to analyse and release the results, in turn enabling these to be acted on in a timely manner;
- The ability to benchmark our results against others in the HE sector.

### When does the survey open and close?

The survey launches on Tuesday 27 April. It runs for three weeks, closing at 11:59pm on Tuesday 18 May.

### How do I complete the survey?

When the survey launches on 27 April, each member of staff will receive an invitation email from People Insight. The email provides you with a unique, personalised link to access the survey. This link will be pre-populated with data about your job role and department, can only be used to complete the survey once and cannot be shared between members of staff. This same link will be used to send survey reminders during the three-week 'live' period. You will only receive a reminder if you have not already completed the survey.

### Is the survey accessible?

The online survey is compatible with multiple browsers and mobile phones. Our testing indicates that it will work with a JAWS screen reader. If you are unable to complete the survey online using your assistive technology, please call People Insight for assistance. They can support you to complete the survey over the phone if required.

People Insight helpdesk (Monday to Friday: 9am–5pm): 020 3142 6511

### Why has the survey been pre-populated with some data?

We will provide People Insight with a list of employees' names, job roles, email addresses and department names so they can issue unique invitations and reminders, route questions and monitor response rates. All other demographic and job-related information is being requested on a voluntary basis. Job role and department affiliation are being pre-populated to ensure that staff are only asked the questions relevant to their staff group and so they can be routed to division and department-specific questions.

In most cases, employees will be allocated to a 'Level 3 entity' department as set out in the University's organisational structure: [governance.admin.ox.ac.uk/university-organisation-structure](https://governance.admin.ox.ac.uk/university-organisation-structure)

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It is not possible to categorise all employees' job roles with certainty due to inconsistencies in the staff record. If your survey includes questions that do not apply to you, please just skip them.

## Why haven't I been invited to complete the survey?

The survey is being sent to all employees of the University of Oxford, including those jointly employed by the University. It is not being sent to college-only or casual staff. The pre-population data will be provided to People Insight a few weeks before the survey opens. If you think you are eligible but do not receive an email invite on 27 April, please check your Spam or Junk folder. If you do not find an email from People Insight, contact: [support@peopleinsight.co.uk](mailto:support@peopleinsight.co.uk)

## Is the survey voluntary?

Yes, participating in the survey is completely voluntary. It is an opportunity to share your views and secure more of the outcomes that are important to you. We really welcome your feedback and hope that you will take part.

## What questions does it ask?

The survey asks about your experience of your work environment and culture, your career development, how you feel about your role and about the University as an employer, as well as for some contextual information. Some additional questions are targeted towards staff in particular roles, e.g. researchers and staff with line management responsibilities, to enable us to better meet their particular needs. Some departments have added up to ten bespoke questions to gather feedback on issues of local concern.

## How long will it take to complete the survey?

The survey takes approximately 15 minutes to complete. Most of the questions simply ask you to tick a single option to indicate how much you agree or disagree with a statement; five questions provide you with an opportunity to write free text comments. As each survey link is unique, you can exit the survey at any point and go back to it later by clicking on the unique link in your invitation email. The system will save your responses.

You will need to submit your survey before the closing date of 18 May. You won't be able to use your survey link again after clicking 'Submit'. You can't save or print off your response, but you can take a screenshot to show that your survey has been submitted.

## What if I work for more than one department?

Your survey invitation will be sent to the email address on your staff record in CoreHR ('University Card department') and your response will be allocated to this department in the reporting dashboard. If you work for more than one department, please respond in relation to the one at which you received your invitation to take part. If both departments share the same email address (e.g. @admin.ox.ac.uk), please choose the one where you work the most hours.

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## Can I have a paper-based version of the survey?

We have requested 300 paper surveys which will be provided to departments with a high proportion of staff who do not regularly use computers. However, we would encourage all departments to support their staff to complete the survey online if possible, as this will provide them with a much more user-friendly experience. It will also make it easier for them to exercise their privacy rights.

To request hard copy surveys for your department, please contact: [equality@admin.ox.ac.uk](mailto:equality@admin.ox.ac.uk)

## Content

### Why are you asking for so much demographic data?

We ask you to provide us with some key items of personal information, reflecting the characteristics protected under equality law, and other demographics that may affect your experience of working at the University. These include questions about your ethnicity, disability, religion or belief, gender identity and sexual orientation. We understand that these are very personal questions for most people and that you may have concerns about confidentiality. Please be assured that all survey responses will be deidentified before being shared with the University.

While all these questions are optional, we hope that you will feel able to provide us with demographic information so that we can:

- Gain a fuller picture of the experience of all staff at Oxford;
- Gather information to help us meet our responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010;
- Identify potential inequalities around ethnicity, gender or any other characteristic;
- Support work on various equality initiatives and charters, including: Athena Swan, the Race Equality Charter Mark; the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index; and the HR Excellence in Research Award: [hr.admin.ox.ac.uk/hr-excellence-in-research](http://hr.admin.ox.ac.uk/hr-excellence-in-research).

### Do I have to answer all the questions?

No. All the questions in the online survey are optional, so if you don't feel that a question applies to you, or you feel uncomfortable or unsure about giving an answer, the system will allow you to move on to the next question. The questions on job role and department in the paper survey are mandatory as they can't be pre-populated

### Why isn't there a 'Don't know' or 'Not applicable' option?

People Insight have advised us not to use these answer options as they can produce misleading results and cannot be benchmarked against the results of other institutions.

If you don't know the answer to a question or are unsure, you could tick 'Neither agree nor disagree' or simply skip it. Please do not answer any questions which do not apply to you.

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Answer 'Neither agree nor disagree' if sometimes you agree but sometimes you don't, or if you feel neutral about a question.

The reporting dashboard can only present the results of 'sentiment' questions on a three- or five-point scale expressing agree/neutral/disagree (e.g. *Strongly agree – Agree – Neither agree nor disagree – Disagree – Strongly disagree*). Other types of questions do not contribute to the thematic scores (e.g. *Engagement*) and the results will be shown in a separate part of the dashboard.

## Terminology

The survey uses the term 'department' to mean your sub-department, faculty, school, institute, centre, unit, section, museum, library or other administrative body of the University as set out on the Governance and Planning website:

[governance.admin.ox.ac.uk/university-organisation-structure](http://governance.admin.ox.ac.uk/university-organisation-structure).

Some questions ask you about your relationship with your line manager or supervisor. If you are in a role without a formal line management arrangement, please think about your relationship with your head of department, faculty board chair, head of division, or another senior colleague.

'Personal Development Review' includes Career Development Review, Career Conversation, appraisal and any other form of employee review.

## Data protection and confidentiality

Please see the online and paper survey Privacy Notices for full details:

[edu.admin.ox.ac.uk/staff-experience-survey](http://edu.admin.ox.ac.uk/staff-experience-survey)

## Is the survey confidential?

Yes. One of the benefits of engaging People Insight to administer the survey is that all the responses will go directly to them and all data will be deidentified before being shared with the University. No one in the University will have access to your complete individual response. The only possible exception would be if we are required by law to break a respondent's confidentiality, e.g. in response to a valid police request or binding court order.

Please feel free to be very honest with your responses, as they will not be tracked back to you personally. People Insight administers the Staff Experience Survey according to strict confidentiality and security policies, in accordance with our instructions.

## Will my department be able to work out who I am based on my responses?

No. All responses to the survey are confidential and no raw data will be shared with your department or the University. People Insight, an independent, third party provider is in charge of the survey. They will group individual responses into broader categories and remove any clearly identifying details from free text comments before sharing the results with the University.

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How can it be confidential when you ask me for demographic details?

All responses to this survey will be processed by People Insight and data will only be shared with the University once it has been deidentified. Results will be provided to departments via a secure, password-protected online reporting dashboard, which will allow interrogation by different demographics, but which will suppress responses for groups where there are fewer than five respondents.

What about anonymity of free text comments?

Please avoid including any details in your comments that might identify you or other members of staff.

People Insight will review all the free text comments and redact any names and clearly identifying details before sharing the survey results with the University. They may refer any comments they are unsure about to the Survey Controller in the Equality and Diversity Unit for further redaction. Despite these precautions, we may not be able to guarantee your anonymity if you say something in a comment which others might recognise as being unique to you. All staff with access to the dashboard are required to protect your confidentiality.

Comments may be quoted in internal and external reports and publications.

If you have any concerns either before or after writing your comments, please contact People Insight directly at [support@peopleinsight.co.uk](mailto:support@peopleinsight.co.uk).

How will the survey data be disaggregated?

The results – including free text comments – will be provided via an online reporting dashboard which allows the data to be broken down by division and department and analysed by a range of demographics such as job role, gender and ethnicity. This will help to target action planning where it is most needed. Analysis will only be possible for demographic breakdowns with five or more responses to ensure that individual responses remain confidential.

For example, if you wanted to know how female academic staff who work part-time had responded, but there were only four people in this group, no numerical data or comments would be shown for them. However, these respondents' results will be shown if the query is made less specific, e.g. all female academic staff, or all female staff who work part-time.

Who will be able to access the results dashboard?

Access to the reporting dashboard will be personalised and password-controlled and restricted to staff with a legitimate work-related need to view it in order to fulfil the purposes of the survey. A small number of staff will be given institutional or divisional-level access while departments have been invited to nominate appropriate members of senior staff, e.g. Head of Department, Head of Administration and Finance, HR Manager, Athena Swan officer, etc. Department users will have access to the data for their own department plus, in some cases, that of closely related departments. All dashboard users will be reminded of their obligations under the Staff Privacy Policy and UK data protection law: [compliance.admin.ox.ac.uk/staff-privacy-policy](https://compliance.admin.ox.ac.uk/staff-privacy-policy).

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## What if I change my mind after submitting the survey?

You have the right to withdraw your consent to the processing of your personal data while the survey is open. In this case, we will stop the processing as soon as we can though this will not affect the lawfulness of any processing carried out before your withdrawal of consent. It will not be possible to withdraw your consent after the survey closes on 18 May.

If you completed the survey online, you can ask People Insight to delete your response and issue you with a new email link if you want to take it again. Please email the helpdesk from the email address at which you received your invitation to complete the survey.

If you submitted a paper survey, your response will be deleted if it can be identified. You will need to provide People Insight with some details about your response to enable them to identify it, e.g. demographic information and distinctive comments. People Insight will not be able to send you another paper survey but you can opt to take the survey online instead.

If you did not receive an email invitation or are unable to use email, please telephone the helpdesk during normal working hours. People Insight will ask you to confirm your identity to make sure it is a genuine call.

For more information, please see the appropriate Privacy Notice:

- online survey privacy notice [edu.web.ox.ac.uk/survey-privacy-notice-2021](https://www.ox.ac.uk/survey-privacy-notice-2021)
- paper survey privacy notice [edu.web.ox.ac.uk/files/papersurveyprivacynoticeandcompletioninstructions.pdf](https://www.ox.ac.uk/files/papersurveyprivacynoticeandcompletioninstructions.pdf)

People Insight helpdesk: [support@peopleinsight.co.uk](mailto:support@peopleinsight.co.uk)

Tel. 020 3142 6511 (Monday to Friday: 9am-5pm)

*People Insight* will inform the University's Survey Controller when a request to withdraw a survey response has been received. They will identify the department but not the individual member of staff.

## Survey results

### Will what I say make a difference?

The staff survey is an important tool for the University to access feedback from staff and take appropriate action, and an opportunity for you to contribute your views to key institutional projects, including our Athena Swan and Race Equality Charter renewals. The results of the survey will enable us to identify strengths and weaknesses and see where we have made progress over the last three years. Actions will be implemented at both the local and central University levels, ensuring that your response really will make a difference.

### How will you use the results?

Institutional results will be reviewed by the Equality and Diversity Unit and other relevant central teams and used to inform wider strategic and equality objectives, long-term planning, evaluation of initiatives and work on various equality initiatives and charters.

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Each department will be able to access their aggregated survey results via an online reporting dashboard and will be encouraged to use this feedback to inform local priorities, objectives and actions.

## How and when will you communicate outcomes?

The survey dashboard will be available approximately a month after the survey end date and we will provide an initial overview of the results at the beginning of July.

Detailed analysis of the results and action planning will continue over the summer and we will give a fuller update at the beginning of Michaelmas term.

## What were the findings of the last survey?

The survey dashboard will include the results for shared questions from the 2018 Staff Experience Survey to enable longitudinal comparisons and targeted action planning. We have provided People Insight with a dataset which includes (where available) respondent division, department, job role, contract type, length of service, mode of working, gender and caring responsibilities. We have not provided any sensitive (special category) personal data or free text comments. The answers to shared questions will be mapped across, taking account of differences between the answer scales. 'Not applicable' will be treated as a skipped question and 'Don't know' as 'Neither agree nor disagree'.

You can read an overview of the results of the 2018 survey, including details of actions that have been taken, at: [edu.admin.ox.ac.uk/past-staff-experience-survey](http://edu.admin.ox.ac.uk/past-staff-experience-survey)

## Information for departments

### What is my role as Head of Department?

Heads of Department have an important role to play in encouraging staff to participate in the survey and in ensuring that results are reviewed and acted on at local level.

We will provide all departments with a communications toolkit a month before the survey launch date and we hope that you will take steps to encourage a strong response rate, e.g. sending an all-staff email to explain why the survey is important.

We also strongly encourage you to take time to review your department results, work with your senior management team to identify areas of concern and communicate the outcomes of the survey to members of the department. We will provide further guidance on how to do this and the tools available to you in the results dashboard.

### Can I monitor my department's response rate?

Once the survey is open, we will have access to a live portal showing the response rates for each division and department. Please contact the Survey Controller for access: [equality@admin.ox.ac.uk](mailto:equality@admin.ox.ac.uk)

### How will we receive our department-level results?

Nominated dashboard user(s) will be given password-protected access to the survey results approximately one month after the survey closes.



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If a dashboard user changes role or leaves the University, their access rights can be transferred to another member of staff at no extra charge. New users can be added to the access list at no charge provided we remain within our overall allowance.

Please contact the Survey Controller to discuss: [equality@admin.ox.ac.uk](mailto:equality@admin.ox.ac.uk)

You can find more information and how-to guides on the People Insight Hub [hub.peopleinsight.co.uk/login](https://hub.peopleinsight.co.uk/login). Contact the Survey Controller for access [equality@admin.ox.ac.uk](mailto:equality@admin.ox.ac.uk)

Is there someone to answer questions and provide support?

For general survey enquiries, please contact: [equality@admin.ox.ac.uk](mailto:equality@admin.ox.ac.uk)

If you have any problems accessing or completing the survey, or want to withdraw or amend your response, contact *People Insight*: [support@peopleinsight.co.uk](mailto:support@peopleinsight.co.uk)