

## Overview of Staff Experience Survey Results 2023

The University ran the second iteration of the Staff Experience Survey through the People Insights platform, from 25<sup>th</sup> April-19<sup>th</sup> May 2023.

### 1. Background

The overall response rate was 58%, with 8,980 responses out of the 15,481 staff invited to participate. This is comparable to typical response rates for the higher education sector. The response rate represents a 1% decrease from 2021; noting an equal spread of increased and decreased responses across divisions. The response rates by division and major job role were:

Response rate	Year	University	HUMS	MPLS	MSD	SSD	UAS	GLAM
Overall	2021	59%	44%	57%	60%	58%	66%	55%
	2023	58%	47%	53%	61%	55%	68%	53%
Academic or Researcher	2021	52%	40%	52%	55%	54%	51%	52%
	2023	51%	44%	46%	57%	49%	69%	53%
Professional, Support or Research-	2021	64%	54%	68%	66%	62%	67%	55%
	2023	63%	51%	65%	66%	61%	68%	53%

The results dashboard enables us to benchmark the 2023 survey results against our 2021 survey and an external HEI comparison. The external benchmark is based on data from comparable questions in surveys from over 50 HEIs, including 13 Russell Group members. The wording of the questions is not always identical, and surveys will have been administered over the last few years, many within the last 12 months.

Three new survey themes were added this year: **Belief in Action, Employee Voice and Communication**. These included 3 new questions, and 3 mapped from other themes within the 2021 survey to facilitate benchmarking. In other survey themes, 8 new questions were introduced, and 2 questions which had been asked at a Divisional level in 2021, were broadened to all staff. The response scale remained the same.

The survey included 5 free text questions, which elicited **30,736** individual comments. These comments have yet to be analysed at a University level, but departments will be able to analyse their own comments in line with their quantitative response data.

### 2. Headline survey responses

Compared to the **sector average**, the proportion of people with favourable views is **above average** on **many topics**. People:

- Feel **engaged** and **proud** to work for the University
- Feel **confident** in their **relationships** with colleagues
- Feel **able to speak up**
- Feel **valued, heard** and **communicated with**
- Views of **pay, personal and career development** are less favourable than elsewhere

Compared to 2021, perceptions are mixed:

- More people feel they have a **voice**, that they are **included** and can **be themselves**;
- Fewer are satisfied with **Pay and Benefits**

### Engagement

Overall, the University has a 72% positive Engagement score, which combines the positive response score from the following questions as an average. Our overall engagement score is **3% higher than the HEI benchmark** but represents a 3% decrease since 2021:

Engagement questions	2023	2021	Vs HEI
I am proud to say I work for the University	83%	89%	+7%
I would recommend my department as a great place to work	66%	69%	n/a
I would recommend the University as a great place to work	71%	72%	+7%
Overall, I am satisfied in my job	69%	72%	-4%
Working here makes me want to do the best work I can	74%	79%	+2%
I would still like to be working at the University in two years' time	69%	n/a	0%

The survey results dashboard identifies key drivers of engagement – factors that most strongly correlate with a positive engagement score. The top five drivers of our engagement score, the things which matter most to people overall, and without action are likely to lead to decreased engagement, are:

Engagement score - key drivers	2023	2021	Vs HEI
I have the opportunity to develop and grow here	57%	57%	+2
I feel valued and recognised for the work that I do	73%	73%	+15
My health and wellbeing are adequately supported at work	66%	67%	+12
I believe action will be taken as a result of this survey	41%	n/a	-1
Senior leaders make the effort to listen to and communicate with staff	61%	65%	+13

It is notable that the first 3 key drivers of engagement relate to personal measures around development, recognition and health and wellbeing support. The remaining drivers highlight the interplay of the relationship between staff perception and leadership action.

### Response favourability

There are positives to draw from the overall survey results. The questions with the highest response rate favourability<sup>1</sup> asked of all respondents<sup>2</sup> were as follows:

Questions with most favourable responses	2023	2021	Vs HEI
I have good relationships with my colleagues	92%	90%	n/a
I am aware of the harassment policy and procedure for University staff	90%	89%	n/a

<sup>1</sup> Responses which were either 'strongly agree' or 'agree'

<sup>2</sup> Some questions were targeted to staff in specific groups, ie, research staff and staff with line management responsibilities. Other questions were specific to Divisions.

I feel well informed about University-level news and activities from central communications	86%	n/a	n/a
I can have a voice on issues within my team	85%	n/a	n/a
I feel able to be myself at work	83%	78%	+14
I am proud to say I work for the University	83%	89%	+7

Furthermore, staff who had had an opportunity to be mentored found this useful (87%, +2%); staff with line management responsibilities feel confident recruiting staff (84%, -1%), and supporting staff to think about their careers (84%, -1%); and staff feel integrated into their teams (82%, +2%).

Questions with the least favourable responses were:

Questions with least favourable responses	2023	2021	Vs HEI
Considering my duties and responsibilities, I feel my pay is fair	36%	49%	-11
I am satisfied with the total benefits package	41%	50%	-7
I believe action will be taken as a result of this survey	41%	n/a	-1
Management and decision-making processes are clear and transparent in my department	43%	43%	n/a
There is a fair and transparent way of allocating work in my department	44%	44%	n/a

**Oxford compares favourably to other HEIs** on a number of themes including Relationships (+14%), Leadership (+13%), Employee Voice (+11%), Being Managed (+6%), Communication (+5%). However, this contrasts with negative shifts in our internal responses since our 2021 survey, in relation to Career Development (Research Staff) -20%, Pay & Benefits -11%, Engagement -3%, Bullying & Harassment -3%, Leadership -2%, Decision-making -2%.

Although only just over a third of staff are satisfied with their pay and benefits (38%), this does not significantly impact overall engagement and job satisfaction. However, the overall low satisfaction rates with pay and benefits compares unfavourably to sector norms where Oxford responses are 9% less. Whilst there is a marked difference in the low levels of satisfaction in pay and benefits between Academic & Researchers (29%) and Professional & Support Staff (44%), the % drop in satisfaction since 2021 is the same for both groups (-11%).

### *Bullying & harassment*

Overall, 90% of staff responded that they are aware of the harassment policy and procedure for University staff, 74% know how to contact a Harassment Advisor and 74% feel confident that complaints about harassment would be dealt with seriously.

There has been a small increase in the proportion of staff responding that they have experienced bullying or harassment (12%, +2%) with a similar increase in witnessed bullying/harassment (19%, +3%). Overall, there has been a decrease (-11%<sup>3</sup>, 35%) in staff reporting, formally or informally, witnessed or experienced bullying or harassment at work, with 25% satisfaction in the handling of reports.

<sup>3</sup> The figure of 35% represents the % of respondents who had witnessed or experienced bullying or harassment, and reported it, formally or informally.

Overall, 74% of respondents feel confident that complaints would be dealt with seriously, although this decreases significantly for staff who have reported bullying or harassment (38%).

The most common forms of bullying or harassment experienced or witnessed were patronising language (57%), hostility (54%), excessive criticism (53%) and microaggressions (47%). The most common reasons not to report were because of a belief that nothing would happen (58%), fear of being labelled as a troublemaker (41%), concerns about confidentiality (39%), not able to prove it took place (27%) and possible victimisation (26%).

Understandably, staff who have experienced bullying/harassment have lower satisfaction rates across the majority of the survey than those who have not.

*Wellbeing and workload*

Theme questions	2023	2021	Vs HEI
My health and wellbeing are adequately supported at work	66%	67%	+12%
My department takes people’s caring responsibilities into account when scheduling meetings	63%	63%	n/a
I am able to strike the right balance between my work and home life	56%	54%	-3%
My department enables flexible working	81%	n/a	+2%
I can meet the requirements of my job without regularly working excessive hours	54%	51%	+3%

Overall, staff responded favourably about their departments enabling flexible working (81%), although Support Staff in Grades 1-5 responded less favourably than Professional & Management Support staff and there was broad variation between Academic roles. A similar proportion of staff responded favourably about managing work demands (54%) and achieving work/life balance (56%), however, these questions also elicited high negative responses. This is notable for line managers and particularly acute for some Academic staff groups who also responded least favourably that their health and wellbeing is adequately supported at work.

*Belief in Action*

For the first time in 2023, staff were asked to respond to the question ‘I believe action will be taken as a result of this survey’, with an overall favourability rate of 41% (-1% vs HEI). The spread of the highest and lowest response rates to this question was broadest by department (83%); and between job roles (57%).

Since the overall response to ‘Belief in Action’ is low, this could highlight gaps in communication and action, potentially reflecting leadership engagement efforts. With this question being a key driver of Engagement, analysis of University-wide and departmental outcomes and action planning will be important to demonstrate commitment to addressing gaps in staff experience which exist across departments, staff demographic groups and job roles.

**3. Variations in response rates**

It is notable that there are very large variations in satisfaction rates across many of the questions according to different demographics which will be subject of further analysis. However, the biggest

contributing factors are by department and job role, eg, favourable responses to the question 'Overall, I am satisfied with my job' ranges by 77%/57% across departments and job roles respectively.

Preliminary review of the data indicates that the experience of staff also differs across protected characteristics (sex, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, religion and belief). In addition, respondents who made 'no selection' to questions regarding protected characteristics or other potential identifiers generally respond least favourably across the survey.

#### **4. Next steps**

The EDU will provide regular updates on analysis of institutional results and action planning. Divisions and departments will be encouraged to develop their own action plans. It is anticipated that a toolkit of resources (including communications) to support departments and Divisions with approaches to action planning and will be made available during October/November.

Further communications through Michaelmas term will focus on actions that have been identified, together with communications around implementation, celebrating successes and demonstrating Change.