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Staff Engagement Survey

Annual report 2018

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Foreword

It is now a year since so many colleagues completed the University Staff Engagement Survey. I am grateful to everyone who has provided frank and honest feedback about what it is like to work here – not simply in the survey, but in the many conversations, emails, meetings and visits I have enjoyed across our campuses since my arrival.

There were a number of positive findings in the survey, of which we can be pleased. However, it has also been important that we give attention to a number of areas for improvement.

One year on from the survey, this report aims to recap the headline results and to highlight a selection of the action plans developed by faculties, schools and departments and by the University Executive Board.

This work is starting to make a difference, but there is of course a long road ahead. There continue to be a number of internal, external, historic and organisational issues to address in improving our culture.

I recognise the concerns expressed by so many colleagues in the survey. I share many of them and through my covenant I will continue to make it my priority to work with you to tackle them together.

I would like to thank all of you who have contributed to this important endeavour so far and invite us to continue to work together so that our culture as an institution can mirror the excellence found in our research, our teaching and our global operations.

Sharon West

Vice Chancellor



Staff Engagement Survey

Background

In April and May 2017, the University undertook a Staff Engagement Survey in partnership with Gallup to measure how staff felt about working for the University. A total of 61% of staff completed the survey, demonstrating significant interest in feeding back on their working environment and on improving how they and colleagues engage within the University.

Staff were invited to respond to key questions that measure the most important elements of staff engagement. For example, “I know what is expected of me” and “I am given the opportunity to do my best”. The survey also measured overall staff satisfaction on important areas such as change management, collaboration, communication, inclusiveness, wellbeing, and supervisor effectiveness. The University also measured ‘world-class engagement’, looking specifically at the role that leaders play in helping their organisations attain high levels of engagement, advocacy and wellbeing.

Findings

Overall, the survey revealed that 20% of staff are engaged, 58% are not engaged and 22% are actively disengaged. The results highlighted that there is much work to be done to achieve the aims of the University’s People Strategy – part of Global Strategy 2020. While there were positive areas, the results clearly showed that there are areas where the University needs to do much better in supporting colleagues, improving understanding of strategic aims, and the critical role that staff play in achieving them.

The survey revealed relative strengths in that many staff

feel the work their colleagues do is of a high quality and that progress is regularly discussed with managers. However, weaknesses lie in the depth of understanding of the University’s mission and purpose; whether staff felt they had the opportunity to do what they do best every day; and whether staff fully understand what is expected of them. The full results can be viewed on the Staff Engagement Workspace at <http://workspace.nottingham.ac.uk/display/StaffEngagement>

Response

The survey results were shared with University Executive Board (UEB) and with managers across the University in July 2017. Faculty Pro-Vice Chancellors and Directors were asked to ensure staff were informed of the results through dialogue and to lead their teams through a process of action planning, with the aim to make improvements in priority areas.

From July to November 2017, every faculty, school and department discussed their results with all staff and used the outcomes to create action plans to build on strengths and address areas of weakness.

A network of engagement champions was created to support the culture change needed to improve engagement across the University. These champions are responsible for supporting their areas in agreeing the approach and facilitating the action-planning process.

With institutional and local responses generally in place since late 2017, the engagement champions have been implementing and reviewing progress against their respective action plans. These are reported to UEB to ensure appropriate progress is being made and best practice is being shared.

76%

of colleagues know what’s expected of them at work

74%

of colleagues are committed to quality work

73%

have someone who talks to them about their progress

66%

feel cared about as a person

64%

have the materials and equipment needed for the job

60%

have the opportunity to the learn and grow

55%

feel someone encourages their development

50%

feel that their opinions count

47%

have the opportunity to do their best every day

43%

feel the University’s mission makes their job important

38%

had received praise in the previous seven days

37%

have a best friend in the workplace

University Action Plans

Following on from the 2017 Staff Engagement Survey, the University has developed an institutional action plan across seven key areas.

Change management

To enhance knowledge and understanding about the principles of change management, and how to effectively lead, manage and communicate during times of change, through training and resources.

Communications

To improve the University's approach to communications, making them more timely, clear and co-ordinated, through better digital channels, and developing a greater culture of engagement between the University and staff.

Development

To review and improve the PDPR process based on staff feedback and best practice approaches; supported by new training programmes.

Inclusiveness

To embed excellent practice in equality, diversity and inclusivity across the University and foster a values-based culture that encourages an inclusive working environment; achieved through a range of programmes and focused initiatives.

Leadership

To provide a range of structured development opportunities for leaders and managers at the University, offline and online.

University Executive Board

To introduce a new 'covenant' for staff engagement that brings greater focus on consultation, distributive leadership and delegated decision-making, and more

visible, open, two-way engagement with staff on the big issues which affect the University.

Wellbeing

To engage a task and finish group to help shape our staff wellbeing vision and strategy, leading to improvements in provision, accessibility of information and enhanced communication.

Progress against these areas is regularly updated and can be viewed on the Staff Engagement Workspace at <http://workspace.nottingham.ac.uk/display/StaffEngagement>.



Faculty, School and Department Action Plans

As well as the institutional action plan, every faculty, school and department was asked to develop a local action plan to respond to the specific staff engagement issues found there. This section highlights examples contained in a broad selection of local action plans across the University.

Faculty of Engineering

A 'real time' voting poll helped more than 220 Administrative, Professional and Managerial (APM) and Technical Staff (TS) agree their preferred focus for staff engagement activities at a Faculty of Engineering away day in January 2018.

Five themes were nominated through the poll, following on from a review of the 2017 Staff Engagement Survey results, and these are being progressed by appointed theme leaders who are tasked with steering short and long-term suggestions for improvement in their areas.

Liz Simpson, the faculty's Performance and Business Systems Manager, is responsible for the PDPR theme. "Julie Harrison, our Head of Faculty Business Operations, came up with the idea to have a day away from work to explore the issues that colleagues feel really strongly about and reinforce the value we place on their views," said Liz. "I put myself forward to lead the PDPR theme at the away day, and we are now developing a series of initiatives and ideas that all support the University's overall PDPR review. This includes simplifying forms and dealing differently with individual job families. Success would be having these suggestions taken up, or partially taken up, by the University."

Meanwhile, Senior Research Development Officer Dr Beth Lunt is championing the career development theme. "Following on from the away day, we pulled together a list of actions and suggestions to present to faculty management on career and professional development – and how we would like to progress these," she explained. "We have had input from around 10 people across the faculty so far and developed quick wins as well as longer term plans which we will work with the faculty on following up.

"One important mechanism for this will be the newly-established network of APM colleagues (EARS – Engineering APM Research Support network) – for whom I am on the steering group. This network, along with other existing faculty and University mechanisms, will be really useful in the longer term, creating cross-faculty interaction, and fostering further engagement."

Other themes highlighted in the Faculty of Engineering staff engagement action plan are communication, reward and recognition, and retention. Each department within the faculty has followed a consultation process leading to an action plan covering all job families (APM, TS, Academic and Researchers).

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Dr Beth Lunt
Senior Research Development Officer



School of Health Sciences

The School of Health Sciences has pulled together specific initiatives for Administrative, Professional and Managerial (APM) teams following the 2017 Staff Engagement Survey which identified opportunities to “enhance knowledge and communication” with this group.

After the school held a well-attended APM workshop to explore how staff felt about the survey results, a small group of APM colleagues was set up to actively drive and review further engagement work. While activities are mostly specifically targeted at APM teams, many of these will also be opened to other staff.

“In our discussions we looked at responses to all the questions and what they meant for us as a school,” explained Julie Evans, Head of Operations and Faculty Lead for Infrastructure. “We met with APM staff to identify the most pressing issues and how we can make immediate improvements.

“Our thinking is that the most effective route to APM engagement is through a peer support group, and in this group we have representation from each of the four APM teams in our school.”

The group has already delivered an Office365 ‘lunch and learn’ session to support understanding of the online programme, a training day on resilience and plans are underway for an APM staff away day.

“Whilst the away day concept is not new, it is significant for us, and is linked to a whole piece of work that is needed on showing that staff are valued,” said Julie.

“We want to celebrate our successes and join up more as a team across the school and wider faculty. We are also looking at other activities to promote more

social interactions within the working day, so as not to disadvantage those with responsibilities outside of work.”

The school’s two engagement champions will continue to oversee the staff engagement action plan, including developing initiatives targeted specifically at academics. Julie added: “Generally we want to make it easier for staff to talk to other teams and find out what is going on across the school – and our aspiration is for colleagues to feel the opportunities we are creating are ultimately benefiting them.”

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Julie Evans
Head of Operations and Faculty
Lead for Infrastructure

School of Medicine

An innovative school-wide professional development conference for all Administrative, Professional and Managerial (APM) and Technical Staff (TS) and a series of other priority people-focused activities, which have been on the school’s agenda for the past four years, have all come to fruition in the last academic year.

Dr Tiffany Hamilton, one of the school’s staff engagement champions as well as Operations Manager for Nottingham Digestive Diseases Centre (NDDC) and Division of Clinical Neuroscience (DCN) and APM Staff Development Officer, explained: “We originally held an APM engagement and development conference, on request, in 2016 and the feedback was very good. In planning for our second conference in June 2018 we used our learnings from staff engagement focus groups and wider discussions from the school’s Athena Swan action plan and APM/TS development sub-group to extend this to all APM and Technical Staff, again with a career and personal development emphasis.”

Dr Hamilton said she “wanted to put colleagues in touch with real people from the wider university that they may not usually meet”, including those who work in similar roles, and use this platform to inform and support their career and/or personal development. “We had representatives from HR, Leadership and Management Academy, the University’s Chaplain, University Counselling, David Ross Sports Centre and Apprenticeship Lead (for potential for staff to engage in upskilling and even gaining further qualifications by using funds from the Apprenticeship Levy) for colleagues to talk to, and Carol Steed provided an inspirational keynote on coaching and development,” she added.

Separately, an NDDC team-building day brought together Allied Health Professionals (AHP) within the

centre’s research teams, the administration as well as operations and management teams, for the first time. “Academics and clinicians work on a day-to-day basis with continuous dedicated support from highly-skilled AHP, administrative and management staff so it is important that we work together as one collaborative team across multiple institutions,” said Dr Hamilton. “We want to show that we are all equals and human, regardless of our roles and remits.

“Throughout the event, which was led by the University’s professional development team and an external company, we worked together in randomised groups and there was a lot of friendly competition and team-building as well as fun.”

A DCN focus group held after the staff engagement review highlighted frustration with dated computers, so over £15,000 was used “to replace as many computers as we could which were old and slow,” said Dr Hamilton. “We know that staff cannot do the best they can in their job without reliable and reasonably fast computers, so this investment has benefits for personal working time as well as for DCN and the University as a whole. By the time our investment is complete we will have approximately 25 new computers for named individuals and, if possible, a few in stock for the future. We know that, especially with upgrades to Windows 10, we will probably need to replace other older machines and we want to be ahead of the game.”

Catering Services

The introduction of enhanced SMART staff engagement criteria into the PDPR process of the Catering Services' senior team is designed to support more effective communication with colleagues who are "traditionally difficult to reach".

Jonathan Hamblett, Catering Operations Director, oversees 400 contracted staff with responsibility for catering in halls and the campus bars, cafes and restaurants across University Park and Jubilee Campus. Jonathan has briefed his operations managers to deliver twice-yearly reports on staff engagement activities.

"This is a really important piece of work for us," said Jonathan. "Whilst team leaders and head chefs have access to computers and email, we have generally struggled to reach other staff. We know colleagues feel cut off from the University and do not always know what is happening in other areas, so we have developed irregular update publications which go into staff meetings and on staff noticeboards whenever there is University-wide news to circulate."

He continued: "Operations managers now undertake bi-annual meetings with staff and teams to advance and update the engagement agenda. The subsequent reports provided by our operations managers, in May and November, show a visual representation of progress as we strive to hit our target to reach at least 85% of staff in our communication. The operations managers are also empowered to take control of what actually happens on the ground."

As Catering Services' staff engagement champion, Jonathan wants to create a knowledge-sharing culture: "Hospitality as an industry tends to ask people to do their jobs and nothing else. We want to open the

eyes of senior managers to the importance of getting better at sharing the bigger picture. Given the really strong themes that came out from the staff survey around technology, we also want to address gaps in our management system and antiquated till system and resolve these by the end of the year."

From the first round of staff engagement reports, Jonathan said he was particularly proud of colleagues' willingness to participate and the advances now on course to improve Catering Services' technology profile.

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Jonathan Hamblett
Catering Operations Director



School of Psychology

A year of events to develop a “sense of community” and help staff and students to look after their own and each other’s wellbeing is at the heart of the School of Psychology’s holistic response to the 2017 Staff Engagement Survey.

The programme, which launched on World Mental Health Day in October 2017, has seen staff and students enjoy a range of activities including lake walks, pom-pom making, jigsaw competitions, weekly biscuit sessions, ‘knit and natter’ lunches, staff afternoon tea and a relaxation station. In addition, a banner asking staff and students to complete the sentence ‘To look after my wellbeing I like to...’ has been installed and promoted in the school.

“While the events programme is not a specific action in our response to the survey, we realised that we needed to develop an overall sense of community and peer-to-peer support, and show staff that we care for them,” said Sophie Richardson, Head of Operations. “We have deliberately focused on people activities, and given this is also something that students were asking for, it made sense to tie the two audiences together.”

The school was committed to “making time to talk”. Sophie explained: “We want to encourage staff to step away from their desk and connect with others. This is important from a mental health perspective and the school is very supportive of the need for greater interaction. We have tried to be creative and timely with the opportunities we have created. For example, doing cake drops for undergraduate students completing their final exams and providing pizza for PhD students writing their final reports, as well as staff-led initiatives such as ‘Fruit bowl February’.

“This is all geared to supporting staff and student engagement, to encourage change, and promote general health in the workplace.”

The programme, which includes promotion of the nationwide Time for Change mental health campaign, was referenced by student nominees when Psychology won the Best School award at the Staff Oscars. Separately, the school has launched its Publication of the Week initiative, whereby staff nominate their own and each other’s work and the school promotes these via its website and Facebook and Twitter feeds.

Elsewhere in the Faculty of Science, the School of Biosciences has focused on encouraging more simple courtesy and establishing a clear culture of good news. A series of Building Better Relationships at Work workshops were held, which supported the development of a Staff Behavioural Charter, and staff and student achievements are highlighted in the Head of School’s monthly newsletter and at School Forum and Board meetings.

Meanwhile, the School of Pharmacy has run facilitated ‘sandpits’ for the Academic, Administrative, Professional and Managerial (APM) and Technical Staff (TS) job families. Each event involves getting staff together to talk about how their working lives could be improved, all ideas are voted upon by the staff, and now regular ‘themed’ events bring colleagues together.

Strategic Change Unit

A review of the effectiveness of team meetings undertaken by the Strategic Change Unit following discussions around the 2017 Staff Engagement Survey has made an immediate impact on “team coherence and engagement”.

The unit, which supports strategic programmes and reviews linked to different themes in the University’s Global Strategy, found that while the survey did not highlight any “major issues” for its 12-strong team, there was a need to create more opportunities for knowledge sharing and interaction.

“Colleagues felt that team meetings were not particularly engaging, used to disseminate information and there was not sufficient time or opportunity to questions,” said Senior Project Manager Sarah Skelton. “As a result, and because our team is split across three campuses, we did not always have an understanding of what each other is working on and the implications for colleagues.”

Three members of the unit formed a small ‘task and finish’ group to review the team meetings and to make suggestions about how they could run in the future. Proposals for a new schedule and format were presented to managers and other team members for their input and a final suggestions were adopted in January 2018.

“It was about finding time for conversation and providing an opportunity to ask questions – so the group looked especially at timings and duration,” Sarah explained. “We have moved from weekly to fortnightly meetings to make it easier for people to prioritise attendance, and extended the meetings from one hour to 90 minutes to allow time to ask questions and be more interactive.

“Meetings now focus on work areas rather than each person’s activities and this enables more in-depth

formative discussion. Each meeting also starts with an informal icebreaker to help people to relax, find out about each other and gel.”

The changes have been received “very positively and colleagues feel more connected and informed,” added Sarah. “It has made everyone realise that team meetings bring an important opportunity to interact as a team. For larger teams than ours the format we use may take longer, of course, so this may need to be adapted – but the principles of allowing greater interaction can be rolled out anywhere.

“All our engagement activities focus on understanding each other – and trying to find more opportunities for social interaction, for fun, with the objective of building relationships.”

“Meetings now focus on work areas rather than each person’s activities and this enables more in-depth formative discussion. Each meeting also starts with an informal icebreaker to help people to relax, find out about each other and gel.

Sarah Skelton
Senior Project Manager

Libraries, Research and Learning Resources

Upskilling colleagues on giving feedback is one of the first activities initiated by Libraries, Research and Learning Resources following the 2017 Staff Engagement Survey, further enhancing the department's wider work on developing team values and behaviours.

Deputy Director Sue Ackermann said the department had used the survey results "very constructively" and, as engagement champion, she led follow-on workshops with 80 staff to identify some practical next steps. One of the issues identified was how to give feedback.

"This relates to the survey questions around 'Opinions Count', 'Recognition' and 'Committed to Quality' – it is about staff feeling valued and praised for their work," explained Sue. "However, it is also about how to give feedback constructively when the message is not so positive and additionally we wanted to empower people to feel more comfortable in giving feedback to someone more senior.

"We took the opportunity to procure some external training, which was delivered to more than 50 staff, and we trained up a further 18 staff to act as feedback mentors to their peers. The anecdotal evidence we have so far is that the feedback loop is closing and the training also supports our overall movement towards recruiting and rewarding people on our values and behaviours – how they are with others – as well as performance."

The training has been embedded in a departmental workspace page, launched in April 2018, incorporating videos to offer guidance as well as further online training and support on feedback tools and techniques. Sue said: "We are continuing to develop this through an interactive Xerte module, which will be available to all

staff. Alongside this we have launched an anonymous online feedback form which comes directly to me for review and response, as well as 'appreciation cards' for colleagues to hand out to each other."

Further training and development for managers, through the Leadership and Management Academy, is also planned.

Separately, the department held staff roadshows in November 2017 and April 2018 to "develop our understanding, discuss ideas and find ways we can work better together". Sue added: "We are a large section spread over seven sites, with a high number of part-time staff, so roadshows at different locations are an effective way for us to come together. It was encouraging to get positive feedback as well as identifying areas we need to improve. We generated lots of ideas and formed our action plan including volunteers ready to take them forward. We think our practical changes will tackle the challenges head on and will lead to stronger engagement with one another and across the University."

A new 'breakfast club' with Sue and department director Caroline Williams is providing colleagues with a direct opportunity to gather updates and feedback their suggestions.

A 'breakfast club' provides colleagues with a direct opportunity to gather updates and feedback their suggestions.



Student Services

A new 'role portrait' designed to supplement generic job profiles in Student Services is one of the first outcomes of the department's response to the 2017 Staff Engagement Survey.

The portrait, created by the department's Service Quality team, helps staff to know what is expected of them. With sections on main tasks, a visual tool for documenting processes associated with the role, expected behaviours and KPIs, it provides an opportunity to focus in on an individual and their specific role. Worked through between a staff member and their line manager, this ensures that a collective understanding is reached, acts as a reference for discussion about the role, and aids the PDPR process.

"Following the survey a discussion was held about whether the generic role profiles we have match what is delivered by individuals on a day-to-day basis, and it was recognised that we needed a complementary role portrait to make it more personal for staff," said Ginny Birney, Senior Continual Improvement Manager – People, in Student Services.

"The general role profiles are needed as the department wants to focus on skills and flexibility, but the portrait is particularly helpful for individual objective-setting. The response from colleagues has been really positive and we are now looking to create something similar with the Service Delivery team."

Staff engagement champions in the Service Delivery team have also introduced a range of initiatives. One is the development of a new assessment team structure in response to concerns from colleagues that they were working in isolation and did not have wider team support. "The new team structure serves to enhance

the co-operation between teams carrying out the same roles located at different sites – effectively eliminating geography as a barrier," Ginny explained.

"The intention is to build a wider community that can support each other, share best practice, share information and – in peak times – share the workload. In practice the assessment manager will cover all elements of assessment across all of our four schools regardless of location. This builds confidence within individuals and teams, helps with engagement and a 'one team' ethos whilst being able to more effectively support our academic colleagues and enhancing the student journey."

Other staff engagement activities devised by the Service Delivery team include: regular team meetings in every area, meeting other teams at monthly briefings and developing 'checklists' in collaboration with academic schools which define the roles and expectations of contributors (University Park Central); a monthly 'stand-up' meeting of the whole team followed by networking (University Park East) and a monthly gathering, with updates and networking (Queen's Medical Centre).

Ginny, who took up her position in Student Services in April 2018, is responsible for staff engagement communications and associated training and development. "The key issues we have identified are around teamworking, collaboration and communication," she said. "Over the next 12-18 months we want to embed a culture of togetherness, resilience and importantly ensuring that staff are recognised for what they do."



“The intention is to build a wider community that can support each other, share best practice, share information and – in peak times – share the workload.”

Ginny Birney
Senior Continual Improvement Manager – People

Welcome Event for New Staff

Human Resources

While Human Resources has created a department action plan focusing on four areas – wellbeing, office environment, staff retention and development, and empowerment and decision-making – an underlying theme of its response to the 2017 Staff Engagement Survey is improving communication to help people feel better connected to the overall aims of the department and to understand their contribution.

Having worked collaboratively to review team and individual issues, and establishing areas of commonality, the four themes identified for action by Human Resources now have dedicated teams working together seeking to further understand the issues of colleagues across the department and agree actions or solutions. In addition, managers have been working closely with their individual teams to increase colleagues' understanding of what is expected of them and to address issues surrounding equipment needs.

Pam Tallis, HR Team Leader (Recruitment Services), whose role is to support the uptake of staff engagement activities, said: "We have looked initially at 'quick wins' to break down barriers between teams and improve knowledge and understanding of work being undertaken across the department. For example, weekly 'briefing rooms' whereby colleagues are invited to drop in to a session when a specific subject is being discussed, such as a project update or policy change; and 'team lunchbite' drop-in sessions to improve understanding of what teams do, their challenges and successes.

"Other initiatives that have proven successful are 'pay day pizza' and to start a department meeting with a networking session, creating time and space for colleagues to interact informally.

"These initiatives are in their infancy, but essentially

we want colleagues to feel better connected with one another and increase their sense of belonging and purpose."

A staff suggestion box is now available for staff to provide anonymous feedback and offer solutions, plus a more formal communication framework for HR is also in development. "Communication is key across all our engagement activities, so we want to guide colleagues on the channels we have available and everybody's responsibilities to deliver," Pam explained. "Once complete, we will share our principles of effective communication and then explore ways to share updates and examples of our work across the department to foster great teamworking and a clearer understanding of how we are all contributing to the aims of the service."

Pam added: "We also intend to introduce a blog from our Director, Jaspal Kaur, and aspire to team and individual blogs as a way of sharing updates and successes, as well as proposing to hold a monthly senior management team Q&A drop-in session.

"We want to create an enthusiasm for our staff engagement activities and for colleagues to feel energised and empowered by them."

“

We want colleagues to feel better connected with one another and increase their sense of belonging and purpose.

Pam Tallis
HR Team Leader (Recruitment Services)



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