

**Imperial College Union
Board of Trustees / 23 June 2021**

Staff Survey Results 2021

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Purpose: To consider the results of the Staff Engagement Survey, which will form the baseline for a number of our KPIs in the new strategy.

To consider the various actions planned / already in place to start improving our scores across the various themes covered by the survey, in pursuit of the 'vision' outlined in our enabler '*great people and culture*'.

1. Background Information

Each year the Union will engage with the NUS Staff Engagement Survey to gain targeted insight into various metrics associated with our staff and culture. This year (2021-22) is the first time we have taken part in the NUS Staff Engagement Survey.

Previously, the Union has relied on limited data supplied as part of the Imperial College Staff Survey. We have departed from this approach as the NUS Staff Engagement Survey offers numerous benefits, such as:

- A question set directly related to Imperial College Union, rather than Imperial College, with wording that reflects this.
- A question set tailored to the Students' Union sector, considering our specific demographics and structure.
- The ability to directly benchmark against other Students' Unions taking part in the survey.
- The ability to benchmark against the charity sector, rather than the Higher Education sector.
- The ability to gain insight into our perceptions of how we have handled our response to the global pandemic.
- The ability for casual staff to complete the survey as well as permanent staff.

We opened the survey to all full-time and casual staff employed in a role with the Union, plus our Officer Trustees. Responses were collected between 21 February - 12 March 2021, in the middle of the national lockdown.

There were 33 full-time staff and Officer Trustees included in the survey. Casual staff was defined as anyone that had worked for the Union on the casual payroll within the past academic year. This amounted to 47 casual staff.

We had 37 out of a possible 80 respondents at a response rate of 46%. However, it is recognised that many of the casual staff included in the possible respondents could be defined as no longer with the organisation. The response rate of full-time staff was 78%.

For the purposes of this paper, results for full-time and casual staff will be presented separately, as they represent markedly different sets of data.

2. Results Summary

This year's survey was undertaken to provide a baseline data set, against which we will measure our performance over the coming years. Relevant KPIs in the new strategic plan link directly back to the survey – including the overall measure of engagement.

It is important to note that despite the survey being undertaken in *exceptional times* (indeed many Unions chose not to participate this year due to this fact), the results are broadly encouraging – and give us a good platform from which to target improvements as we recover from the period of transformation we are currently in, and the COVID-19 pandemic.

In particular, it is important to note that 70% of permanent staff are positive to our response to the pandemic, with only 17% answering negatively to this crucial area.

Some other headline results include:

- i. The results reflect a good level of permanent staff satisfaction in a number of themes within the organisation – which is both encouraging (and a little surprising) given the timing and context of the survey.
- ii. The results also reflect an extremely low level of casual staff satisfaction in all themes. Given the limited opportunities for work during the period of the survey, a significant amount of this is driven by historical (and well documented) issues.
- iii. There is a significant amount of 'neutral' in almost all themes, reflective of where the organisation was / is in our long-term transformation.
- iv. Permanent staff are significantly more engaged and satisfied (65%) than our casual staff (36%).
- v. Overall satisfaction is 10% points below the third sector average, and 13% points below the SU sector average.
- vi. The three highest scoring areas for our permanent staff team are: Colleagues (78%), Management (74%) and Engagement (71%).
- vii. The three lowest scoring areas for our permanent staff team are: Service (35%), Learning & Development (46%) and Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (52%).

The open comments reflect some following specific themes:

- viii. All staff value the friendly and flexible environment that ICU provides and enjoy working with their colleagues.
- ix. There is a desire to eliminate current 'silos' within the organisation and bring everyone together under a single purpose.
- x. There is a desire for more transparency with decision-making, particularly in terms of our bars and venues.
- xi. Casual staff are particularly unhappy about the disparity in terms of pay rate with the College for similar (and often identical work).
- xii. Casual staff are particularly unhappy about the clarity of promotion and development pathways, in particular the ability to apply for Supervisor and Duty Manager roles.

In terms of our next steps:

- i. A broad comment / narrative is provided in the table below, which also sets out the full results broken down by theme and permanent / casual staff.

- ii. The People & Culture strategic Review has been launched, and we envisage a full action plan being considered by Board in September 2021 that takes into account our new financial model, staffing structure and strategy.
- iii. We will also be using these results to inform a staff development day on 3 June which will feed into the review.
- iv. With specific reference to casual staff, it is clear we have a major piece of work to do in terms of building our engagement and satisfaction. This has been identified as a standalone theme as part of the strategic review.

3. Results & Actions

The overall results from the survey are provided below, broken down between our permanent and casual staff teams. A narrative is provided to contextualise the result, but it is important to note that a detailed action plan setting out our work to improve our scores in all areas will be developed as part of the People & Culture Review – reporting to Board in September.

Theme	Descriptor of Theme	Permanent			Casual			Narrative / Comments
		Positive	Neutral	Negative	Positive	Neutral	Negative	
Overall	The overall marker of satisfaction is to what extent a staff member would recommend the organisation as a good place to work.	65%	16%	19%	36%	36%	27%	This measure is included as a KPI in our strategic plan. All the other themes below feed into this.
COVID-19 Response	This theme considers perceptions over how well the organisation has responded to the global pandemic, including communicating key changes and looking after staff wellbeing.	70%	13%	17%	24%	48%	28%	We are now planning our exit out of the pandemic, as we head towards a new operating model. This will include more time back in the office for staff, but also the introduction of more flexible working once social distancing measures are ended. In addition, our planning for the 2021/22 academic year will include a provision (and mitigating actions) for some continued disruption to the College and the Union for at least the period until January 2022.
Colleagues	This theme considers perceptions over how well staff work together, and the respect and trust they have for each other.	78%	15%	7%	52%	18%	30%	We start from a relatively strong baseline in this area. However, as we look to grow out of the pandemic, it is crucial that we maintain the sense of community within the staff team. We will continue to roll out various development days and staff engagement sessions on key topics, bringing teams together and giving individuals the opportunity to work with others they may not engage with on a daily basis.
Communication	This theme considers perceptions over how well the organisation communicates with staff as to what it is doing and how well it provides opportunities for staff to ask questions and to find out more. It includes perceptions over how transparent and honest the organisation is and how we act on information we receive.	66%	16%	18%	27%	21%	52%	Once in post, the new Director of Marketing & Communication will be tasked with the development and delivery of an Internal Communications Plan (which is included in the JD). In the meantime, we will continue to make use of various formats including all staff meetings, staff away days and email newsletters. This will also naturally improve as staff return physically to the office.
Wellbeing	This theme considers perceptions over how the organisation supports the wellbeing of staff across numerous themes, including workload, work/life balance and the support it provides when things aren't going well.	61%	21%	18%	44%	33%	23%	There will be two strands to our work in this area, shaped heavily by the feedback provided by staff. The first will be around changes to our current working practices and policies so they better promote staff wellbeing. The second will be around our emergency support for staff with acute wellbeing needs, and what we can put in place to support them.
Engagement	This theme considers perceptions over how engaged staff are with the organisation and to what extent it forms part of the identities of our staff. It considers whether staff are proud to work here and how much effort they are willing to put into their roles.	71%	13%	16%	53%	26%	21%	We start from a relatively strong baseline in this area. However, it is critical that we address the 'who employs our staff' question over the next 18 months – even if this means continuing with the current arrangements, but understanding more clearly what flexibility we have in terms of local policies / decisions.
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion	This theme considers perceptions over how well the organisation treats staff across a spectrum of diverse backgrounds. It considers the efforts made by the organisation to maintain a diverse demographic and encourages those from under-represented groups to follow their chosen careers.	52%	24%	24%	52%	30%	18%	We know we have a significant amount of work to do in this area, and it has been included within the strategy as both one of our values (inclusivity), and our aims (reduce inequality). We are planning the development of a new EDI Strategy in 2021/22 which will be accompanied by an action plan for the Union – including how we ensure our staff team is more representative of the population we serve.
Leadership	This theme considers perceptions of the organisation's vision, leadership and direction. It considers the ability of the leadership group to lead by example and make the organisation successful and how in touch they are with popular opinion.	56%	22%	22%	36%	24%	40%	We have now set a new strategy, and since February, are in the process of rebuilding the Senior Management Team of the Union. In addition, we are taking steps to formalise the Leadership Group within our governance that will clearly identify its role, and enable us to better communicate its impact for staff.

Learning & Development	This theme considers perceptions of the opportunities provided by the organisation for staff to learn and develop in their career or personal lives and how staff can learn from one another.	46%	26%	28%	36%	27%	37%	Our indicative back to basics budget includes significant additional investment in staff learning and development. We also plan to work more closely with the College to better understand and make use of staff development they provide, including access to training and career mentoring. This will be a significant stream within the people and culture development plan.
Management	This theme considers perceptions of how much trust and respect exists between staff and their managers, and how well managers offer support and foster collaboration within their teams.	74%	17%	9%	47%	24%	29%	We start from a relatively strong baseline in this area. The new staff structure of the organisation will result in the identification of both the Senior Management Team and Line Manager's Group. We plan to make much greater use of the latter, for consultation, decision-making and cascade communication.
Performance Management	This theme considers perceptions of mechanisms that exist for staff to gain feedback on their performance, and the standards that are expected within teams. It considers how performance is measured and how improvement is fostered.	62%	21%	17%	27%	24%	49%	We will be rolling out a revised Personal Development Review Process (PDRP) for the 2021/22 academic year that is directly linked to the strategic plan, annual planning round, and our values. We will also be looking to invest in learning and development for our line managers within the organisation as we move out of the pandemic – with specific sessions on performance management, coaching, and managing through managers.
Reward	This theme considers perceptions of how well rewarded staff feel for their work, in relation to pay and benefits. It considers whether staff feel that the rewards they receive for their work are fair.	64%	18%	18%	27%	25%	48%	Due to our employment relationship with the College, the Union's pay scale for permanent staff is already significantly above the sector average, including a generous pension. However, we already plan to consider how communicate the non-financial rewards that the Union offers / can offer on top of this. In addition, we know for casual staff that pay rates are significantly below the College and there is broad agreement that the Union should match these from 2021/22.
Role	This theme considers perceptions of how staff feel their roles fit into the organisation, how well defined they are and how fulfilling they find the work. It is a measure of how well-defined staff feel their roles are in the context of the organisation's policies and procedures.	67%	18%	15%	57%	17%	26%	The new staffing model outlined in 'back to basics' has been developed to reshape the organisation in line with the new strategy. This will include a significant number of new staff roles, and changes to some established posts. We will include a review of all JDs as part of the annual PDRP process this year. The annual monitoring round will clearly showcase the impact that staff are having, and we already plan introduce reflection sessions for all staff on a termly basis at staff development days to reinforce the positive impact they are having on our mission, aims and enablers.
Service	This theme considers perceptions of how high a standard of service staff feel that the organisation delivers to our members. It is a measure of how staff feel about the organisation's competency, both from their immediate colleagues and those in other teams.	35%	35%	30%	20%	50%	30%	The new strategic plan, KPIs, financial model, and annual planning round have all been designed to reshape the services that we provide for students. By 'going back to basics' the intention is to do fewer things which are core to our role as a students' union, but better. In addition, the appraisal process will now link directly from the annual planning round, to ensure individual targets are aligned with the organisation's overall objectives.
Values	This theme considers perceptions surrounding our organisational values, and to what extent we have a well-defined sense of shared purpose. It is a measure of how cohesive we are as an organisation and how ethical we are in our practices.	55%	24%	21%	40%	30%	30%	The new strategic plan includes five new organisational values which were developed via significant consultation – including with permanent and casual staff. As part of the people and culture review, we are now looking at a range of ways (including reward, recruitment and the appraisal system) of embedding these amongst the staff team.