**Teaching Fellows Satisfaction Survey**

**Background**

This survey was commissioned by Aberdeen UCU as a result of the number of casework issues being raised with the branch by Teaching Fellows. It sought to identify attitudes held by this group of staff towards their terms and conditions and their perceptions of the way they are valued and developed by the University of Aberdeen.

The survey was launched on 6 March and the opportunity to participate was made available to Teaching Fellows across the University of Aberdeen. The survey was hosted by UCU using “Survey Monkey” software. It closed on 14 April so staff had 6 weeks to decide whether to participate.

The questionnaire included 34 questions – under 5 headings and each provided the opportunity to provide qualitative comments about participants’ experiences. No questions were mandatory and participants could choose to skip any question.

**Survey results**

* 55 teaching fellows logged on to the survey and of these 46 went on to participate fully in the survey.

***Contracts***

* 52% of respondents are employed on open-ended full-time contracts whilst 38% are employed on fixed-term contracts
* 81% of those on open-ended contracts 81% do not include a project completion date
* 33% of respondents have worked at the University of Aberdeen for less than 3 years, 15% have worked here for more than 10 years
* 69% have had their contract renewed since working at the University
* 68% have been on more than one type of contract at the University
* 20% of those who have had their contract renewed have had this happen four times, 34% of respondents indicate that this has happened once and one respondent has had their contract renewed more than five times
* 39% of respondents expect to be at risk of redundancy due to funding constraints
* Comments in this section include:
1. Questions about the way that open-ended contracts operate
2. Losing good people because they are only employed on short-term contracts
3. Effect on motivation of having short-term contracts
4. Concerns about the University’s ability for long-term planning and succession planning
5. Mixed experiences about the way in which contract changes are handled (some positive and some negative)
6. The importance of teaching which should require teaching staff to be employed on longer-term contracts

***Working hours***

* 76% of respondents are employed to work more than 26 hours per week
* 73% of respondents are required to fulfil between 6 and 15 hours’ contact time per week during term time
* 54% of respondents spend more than 21 hours per week of non-contact hours on top of teaching – including staff who are required to deliver between 6 and 10 hours teaching
* 6 respondents indicated that they typically work more than 50 hours per week
* 65% of respondents stated that the hours that they are contracted to work are not an accurate reflection of the hours they actually work and that compromising on preparation activity still does not allow the opportunity to work the contracted number of hours
* Comments were made about the lack of available information about the hours that teaching fellows are required to work, the variations between departments and schools and the hours that are required to fulfil the expected duties – with some part-time staff having to work almost full time to get the job done.
* Respondents were provided with the opportunity to comment about working hours and this open-ended question solicited the highest number of responses of all those asked. Concerns revolved around:
1. The amount and turnaround times for assessment takes a significant amount of time which requires staff to work evenings and weekends to keep up and in some cases means that respondents are unable to take their annual leave entitlement
2. Insufficient time available to undertake innovative tasks/research which limits progression
3. A minority of respondents indicate that they work long hours in order to undertake unpaid research in order to progress
4. The amount of time allocated for different tasks is inaccurate and in some instances the complexity of tasks is not understood meaning that the number of contracted hours is incorrect and the method of calculating hours appears to be opaque to many
5. A number of respondents expect to work the hours required to deliver what is required and indicate that there is flexibility with regard to when work is done and reduced hours between teaching terms
6. A concern was raised about whether the rate of pay for teaching fellows is standardised across the University

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***Job descriptions***

* 36% of respondents do not have a job description for their role
* Of those who have a job description only 30% (7 respondents) have a HERA scored job description – the others have “further particulars”
* One respondent indicates that they have a HERA scored job description customised to reflect their particular role
* 61% of respondents indicate that their job description does not accurately reflect the job that they do
* Comments raised in this section include:
1. Roles changing due to contract renewals/change in funding source/hours and duties changing but no new job descriptions are being written and agreed
2. The amount of time required to undertake a variety of different tasks is not understood or reflected in job descriptions
3. Some tasks (particularly admin) are not reflected in job descriptions
4. The generic way in which jobs and contracts are offered and the level of interpretation that is acceptable
5. The amount of time required to teach does not allow time for other elements of HERA requirements therefore a low score is only possible and a national framework does not reflect local requirements

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| ***Development*** Respondents were asked to indicate their level of satisfaction with a number of different development activities. The following provides an overview about satisfaction in different areas (respondents who are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied are not included in the results).* 31% of respondents are dissatisfied with induction whilst 23% indicate satisfaction
* 25% are satisfied with role-specific training whilst 20% are dissatisfied
* 25% are satisfied with mentoring whilst a similar percentage are dissatisfied
* 45% are dissatisfied that they have regular appraisals whilst 23% are satisfied
* 48% are dissatisfied with the opportunity to undertake scholarly research whilst13% are satisfied
* 29% are dissatisfied with the opportunity to undertake pedagogic research whilst 5% are dissatisfied
* 36% are satisfied with the constructive feedback from colleagues about their work whilst 33% are dissatisfied
* 66% are dissatisfied with promotion opportunities whilst 15% are satisfied
* 58% are dissatisfied with the opportunity to develop within their current role compared to 15% being satisfied

Respondents were asked to indicate whether they agreed or disagreed with a number of different statements relating to their development. The following summarises the responses in this area:* 28% do not receive regular updates on funding opportunities for pedagogic research whilst 20% do
* 40% receive regular updates on funding opportunities for subject specific research whilst 24% don’t
* An equal number of respondents believe that they have/have not been provided with appropriate training to allow them to perform their role at the expected level
* 54% have not had the opportunity for regular meetings with a mentor whilst 23% have
* 46% of respondents are aware of the current workload model within their department and their role in it whilst 40% are not aware
* Comments in this section include reference to:
1. Lack of mentoring scheme in specific departments
2. Teaching not allowing time for research
3. Not knowing who to ask/what’s expected/lack of developmental support/lack of information about different matters (workload modelling mentioned more than once)
4. Role does not qualify for training/funding/other opportunities
5. Fixed-term nature of the role means there are no funding opportunities

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| 1. Lack of opportunity to apply to their School’s research committee for funding (which then limits promotion)
2. Lack of time for training and development activities
3. Lack of recognition of and respect for teaching fellows leading to lack of investment in their professional development
4. Lack of support for and assistance with development/promotion
5. Opportunities to develop teaching skills are available and should be a mandatory requirement for those who are teaching
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| ***Support and feedback***In this section respondents were again asked to indicate their level of satisfaction with support and feedback provided to them.* 79% of respondents are satisfied with the support received from colleagues whilst 15% are dissatisfied
* 33% are satisfied with support from supervisors whilst are 15% are dissatisfied
* 26% are satisfied with feedback from supervisors whilst 18% are dissatisfied
* 81% are satisfied with support from support staff whilst 13% are dissatisfied
* 41% are dissatisfied with support from the University whilst 23% are satisfied
* 81% are satisfied with feedback from students whilst 2.5% are dissatisfied
* Comments in this section include reference to:
1. Lack of a supervisor and therefore no feedback (in some instances)
2. Senior staff are unaware of what teaching fellows do
3. Colleagues seen by some respondents as supportive
4. Only feedback received is as a result of teaching evaluations with students
5. Lack of appraisal – these would be viewed as a good way of getting regular feedback
6. Lack of support – a feeling of being “managed” and not supported
7. Availability of development/support but lack of time to take up the opportunity
8. Lack of opportunity to respond to negative feedback from students
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| Respondents were asked to agree/disagree with 3 statements about their career development. * 42% state that they believe that in order to progress their career they should leave their present post whilst 29% disagree with this statement
* 34% believe that in order to progress their career they should leave the University of Aberdeen whilst 29% disagree with this statement
* 50% do not believe that in order to progress their career they should leave academia whilst 13% disagree
* Comments in this section:
1. Lack of certainty about the future affecting motivation levels
2. The best job a respondent has ever had but motivation levels affected by staffing and student levels
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| **General feedback**Respondents were asked to provide further comments or suggestions about the Teaching Fellows role. Responses included the following issues:* Opportunities for promotion should be extended to include those with a projected contract end date
* The role is a good way to develop and is appreciated but it is difficult to plan ahead if only offered a short-term contract
* If employed only on a short-term contract then don’t bombard staff with issues of no concern
* Lack of value/respect for the role where there is no status, low salary and a requirement to justify individual performance
* Lack of research activity limiting promotion and progression
* Career paths are difficult to take seriously without long-term contracts – without these they are perceived a position to fill a gap
* Need clearer job descriptions, definition of differences between roles (such as that of a Teaching Assistant)
* Funding sources need to be explored more fully for contracts and development opportunities
* Transport between different sites causes teaching fellows problems when teaching on the different sites
* Individuals who have had a poor experience not recommending the institution to others
* Workload so high that the opportunity to develop is limited
* Poor salaries for the work that’s required
* Teaching Fellows Network viewed as a positive initiative but not always easy to attend
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