

Rowett Institute – Staff Survey data (2023)

The SMMSN staff survey was run in June 2023 to allow the data gathered to be used in the subsequent school application for a Bronze Athena Swan (AS) award, which was successfully granted in Jan 2024.

The overall response rate across the school was 47%. Of the Rowett Institute (RI) staff, 67% (n=68) completed the survey (Figure 1). This was the highest response rate across the school, but could still be better.

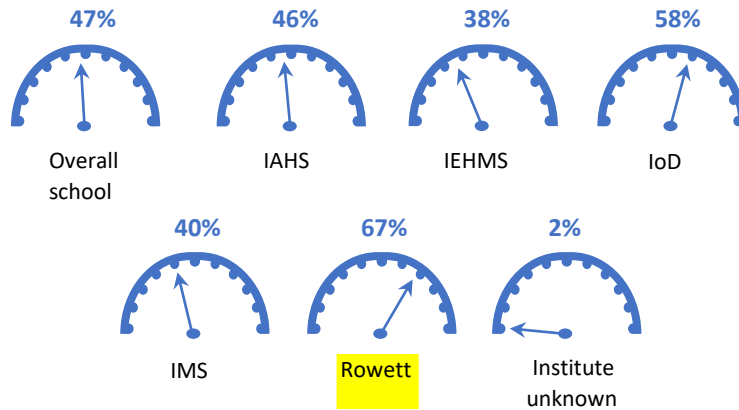


Figure 1 Survey response rates (% respondents) across school and individual institutes.

The survey was divided into seven Themes, and a summary of the responses is addressed below:

Theme 1: Belonging and Inclusion

Rowett staff responded positively to feeling part of the School and Institute, and valued by the University and students and colleagues, providing generally more positive responses than the SMMSN averages (Table 1). The majority of respondents also responded that the working environment was supportive (75%), inclusive (71%) and more than half thought it was sociable and welcoming (54% and 53% respectively). There were however a reasonable number of people who thought their working environment within RI was stressful, pressurised or cliquey (15%, 19%, 24% respectively). Most staff thought the university and Rowett management promote a positive culture in relation to equality and diversity.

ACTION: The Induction process has been improved which we hope will make the Rowett more welcoming to new arrivals, and new regular social activities are run regularly (eg. film club and craft club). Any other suggestions to improve feelings of Belonging and Inclusion would be welcomed.

Table 1 – Summary of data describing the Working Environment (PNA – prefer not to answer)

	SMMSN	Rowett Institute	Rowett Male	Rowett Female	Rowett - PNA
I feel part of my School/Directorate	74%	85%	86%	95%	43%
I feel valued by the University	67%	73%	77%	81%	28%
I feel valued by students and others I provide a service to	88%	88%	87%	95%	57%

Supportive	77%	75%	83%	77%	
Inclusive	61%	71%	74%	74%	
Stressful	33%	15%	4%	18%	
Sociable	48%	54%	57%	56%	
Welcoming	56%	53%	44%	62%	
Happy	34%	29%	22%	36%	
Pressurised	34%	19%	17%	18%	
Competitive	13%	9%	4%	8%	
Cliquey	17%	24%	30%	15%	
Fun	17%	16%	13%	15%	
Macho					
Sexist	2%				
Other	7%	4%	4%	3%	
Prefer Not to Answer					

Internal Communications

In response to comments from the 2020 staff survey, our internal communications have been modified, e.g. there are now regular SMMSN News Bulletins and additional messages from Institute Directors including emails, digest or at Open Meetings.

Communications in my School are clear and relevant to me and my role	73%	77%	83%	80%	
Communications in my Institute are clear and relevant to me and my role	77%	80%	83%	82%	

Most staff thought that the communications within Institute and school were very good, with positive comments about the Newsletter and Open meetings. Some negative comments relating to the number of emails, and untargeted emailing were made.

ACTION: Recent policies have been introduced to reduce email traffic by including more information in the school and institute newsletters and encouraging people to only 'reply all' if everyone needs to know their response.

Theme 2: Gender Equality

Most staff (93%) believed that the University is committed to equality of opportunity for all of its staff with a further 95% women and 91% men stating that the Institute leadership actively supports gender equality. Negative comments related to maternity and paternity leave lengths of time and payments, and also difficulties in accessing University childcare facilities.

Theme 3: Work-Life Balance

More than half of Rowett staff (51%) agreed with the statement 'Following on from the COVID-19 pandemic, my workload has increased'. This compared to 57% at a school level. The increased workloads were split across various aspects of teaching and delivering research projects. 54% of respondents indicated this had had a negative impact on their work-life balance (affecting 56% of women compared to 36% of men). Half the RI staff stated that they used hybrid working, with more women (26%) than men working part-time.

Specific comments also showed that the workload pressure was potentially impacting staff ability to apply for promotion/regrading, attend personal development and training courses. Statements noted that "*non-urgent tasks (committee membership, paper writing, external paper reviewing etc) routinely get moved to 'tomorrow' and consequently never done*". There were positive comments that hybrid working where possible, contributed to a better work-life balance and well-being while also helping with caring responsibilities. Other comments indicated that hybrid meetings were less effective than in person meetings.

There were different levels of awareness of the special leave available to staff, with 97% aware of maternity leave, 81% aware of Paternity/ co-maternity leave but only 64% aware of other special leave, including for urgent domestic distress.

ACTION: The EDIT family liaison advisor is available to make staff aware of the support that is available within the University, and discussion of workload and special leave is encouraged in the Annual Review, using the AS checklist to aid that discussion.

Theme 4: Bullying and Harassment

Fortunately no-one at the Rowett responded that they were being 'bullied or harassed at work' although a small percentage (4%) indicated that they had felt discriminated against in the past 12 months.

ACTION: The anonymous University reporting policy was highlighted in the newsletter, and the SMMSN Zero Tolerance policy posters are displayed on the media screen.

Theme 5: Career Development

More than 80% of staff are satisfied with their roles and level of responsibility, and with their level of learning and development. In fact, 78% had taken part in training in the previous 12 months.

Only 81% of staff indicated they had had an annual review in the previous 12 months despite this being an Institute requirement. This meant that not all staff had the opportunity to discuss various factors relating to their career and work satisfaction (Figure 2). Specific comments included a desire to know what happens with the Annual Review forms, and how (or even if) any comments are acted on. Just under 25% of staff indicated that they would like a mentor. Not all staff complete the AS checklist during their Annual Review.

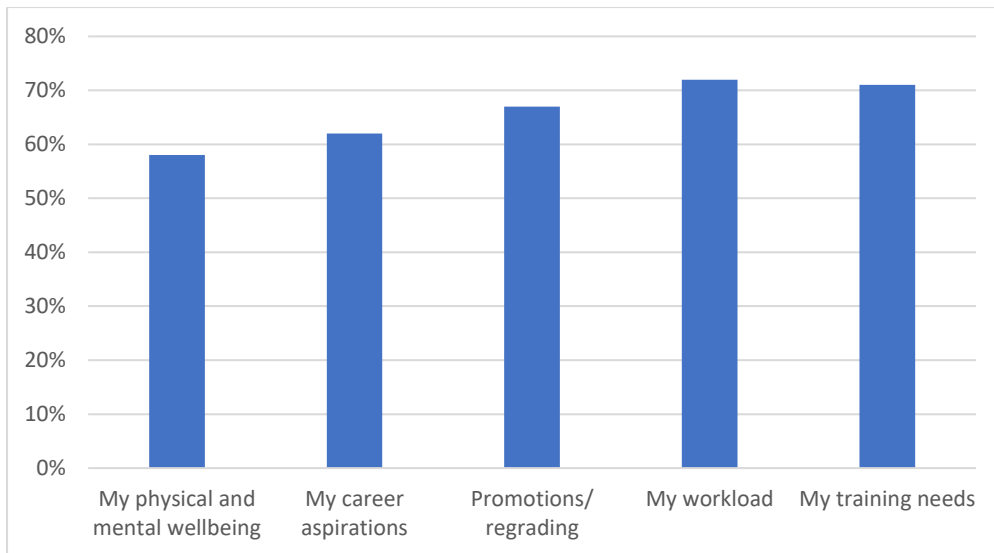


Figure 2 Percentage of staff stating that the specific topics noted were discussed during their Annual Review. Note that only 81% of staff had an Annual Review in the 12 months preceding the survey.

ACTIONS:

- Line managers are reminded about the importance of the Annual Review process and completion of the AS checklist to assist discussion.
- Annual Reviews are now discussed during a dedicated Institute Executive Committee meeting a few months after the Annual Review process has been completed. IEC have actioned a number of requests that have come through the annual review process.

Theme 6: Wellbeing

70% of staff felt that their mental health and wellbeing were supported in my Institute. Although this seems positive it potentially means that 30% of staff do not feel supported. There was a specific suggestion to introduce mental health training for line managers.

ACTIONS:

- Since the survey, mental health awareness has been the focus of several events held within SMMSN, and is also part of the school's PhD supervisor training.
- Some members of staff have a Mental Health First Aid certificate. We need to identify ways by which this support could be available to all staff as required.

General Points

Many staff took the opportunity to submit additional comments which are welcome as these are an opportunity for upward feedback. Many of these free text comments have led to the specific Actions described in the sections above, often implemented since the survey was run in June 2023. Unfortunately, the anonymous nature of the staff survey meant that specific comments were not able to be directly followed up, even when there was a desire to do so.