Staff Survey 2021 results

The majority of staff think the University provides a safe working environment, feel respected and motivated, derive satisfaction from their jobs and are proud to work at St Andrews, according to the results of the 2021 Staff Survey.

The 2021 Staff Survey took place between Friday 12 November and Friday 3 December and we’d like to share with you some of the results. Findings will be incorporated into the refreshed University Strategy and heads of school and unit directors received survey report packs for their school or unit this week. Reports are provided to schools and units who received a minimum of ten responses, so not all schools and units will receive a report pack.

The survey period was a time of considerable disruption, with industrial action on pay and pensions, and uncertainty over the direction of the Covid pandemic, with the emergence of the Omicron variant, ongoing Government restrictions, and the possibility of further lockdowns creating a high risk of the “cancellation” of a second Christmas in a row. It also saw the emergence of rapid inflation as a new threat to economic wellbeing and recovery.

The survey achieved a participation rate of 43.3%, a decline on the 57% participation rate achieved for the 2017 survey. The lower participation rate, as well as the high-level findings from the survey, must be viewed in the broader context of the survey period.

While the response rate is lower than in 2017, the respondents were representative of our staff population and therefore provide us with useful data.

There were several high-scoring positive themes emerging from the results of the survey. Health and wellbeing was the highest positive scoring theme, which was especially encouraging to see in light of the very challenging years we have all experienced. More than 79% of staff were aware of the mental health and wellbeing services that the University offered for support and over 61% of staff where aware of the Report and Support tool to report instances of bullying, harassment and discrimination.

In response to the pandemic, we saw staff adopt new and emerging digital working approaches almost overnight. Digital working is also a strong positive theme in the staff survey with 76% of staff being confident to work online digitally and 86% knowing how to access IT support.

Job satisfaction and diversity and inclusion were also strong positive themes: 83% of staff valued having flexibility in their working arrangements. They felt that the University provided a safe working environment (76%), where they were respected (73%), motivated (70%), derived satisfaction from their work (76%) and were proud to work at the University of St Andrews (74%).

The majority of staff were aware of the University strategy (81%) and more than 63% were aware of the University's ambition to be net zero by 2035. While there have been undeniable global changes through the pandemic, the University was able to conduct a major consultation exercise in 2019 developing the people strategy and enhancing our professional services. The completion of Walter Bower House at the Eden campus, relocating our professional services and topping the Times & Sunday Times University Guide 2022 while working through a pandemic is a testament to the commitment and hard work of University staff.

A significant proportion of respondents (23%) indicated that they are unhappy with their work-life balance, felt insufficiently involved in changes (25%) and that they could not influence practice and policy in their school or unit (38%).

The General Engagement Index (GEI) score of 77% has remained relatively constant, dropping only 4% since 2017 but remaining higher than in 2015. (NB The positive response percentages for the five questions used to calculate the GEI 2021 scores exclude the neutral and blank responses to make it comparable with the 2017 and 2015 surveys, however, for examination of the 2021 survey data on its own, the neutral and blank responses to the questions have been included in the percentage calculations.) The Office for National Statistics has indicated a drop in estimates of general wellbeing for the UK population as a whole and, therefore, the University GEI remains

https://intheloop.newsweaver.com/intheloop/1umjta0ks31h37om8y...
Of the nine themes surveyed, developing Entrepreneurial St Andrews and World Leading St Andrews are the two strategic themes that score below the average positive score for the survey (-15% and -10% respectively). However, staff are aware of the net zero 2035 ambitions and we have seen evidence of our world-leading St Andrews credentials in our recent REF ratings. These themes continue to be developing areas of focus for the University.

A positive finding was that, when benchmarked, the University scored more positively than the average UK higher education institution (HEI) in relation to staff being more likely to recommend the University as a good place to work, with a strong sense of belonging, being motivated and looked after. Benchmarking indicated areas to improve were on inter-team working, wishing to be more empowered to impact on sustainability, being involved in change and having more development opportunities.

Throughout the survey staff commented on how much the congeniality and competence of fellow colleagues contributed to their positive feelings about working at the University and we look forward to building on the strengths identified and working to improve those areas of importance to our colleagues.

In the Loop is the newsletter for University staff and students. Please be aware that if you share content with someone outside the University and they post a comment on an item, the comment will appear in your name.

In the Loop is produced by Corporate Communications and issued every Friday. If you have news to share or content ideas please email intheloop@st-andrews.ac.uk by 12 noon on a Wednesday. News items received after the deadline will be considered for the following week’s edition. Please note that we reserve the right to edit copy for style, and submission does not guarantee inclusion.