New Ways of Working Staff Survey

Conducted online 10 March 2021- 24 March 2021

Total responses: 2532

NWW Staff survey results: 2532 responses

Q1 In which part of the University do you work?

Category	Value
A UAS section	892 (35.7%)
A Divisional Office	239 (9.6%)
Academic department/faculty	1,001 (40.1%)
GLAM	365 (14.6%)

Q2 What are your current working arrangenents (during the pandemic)?

Category	Value
Working on site all of the time	124 (4.9%)
Working remotely all of the time	1,884 (75.1%)
A mix of onsite and remote working	481 (19.2%)
I am currently furloughed	20 (0.8%)

Q3 How satisfied are you with the proposed approach for agreeing how decisions are made?

Category	Value
Satisfied	1,419 (56.6%)
Very satisfied	632 (25.2%)
Neither satisfied not unsatisfied	355 (14.2%)
Unsatisfied	82 (3.3%)
Very unsatisfied	18 (0.7%)

Q5 How do you feel about the prospect of defining your working arrangements for the future?

Category	Value
Really excited – it's a great opportunity	1,019 (40.7%)
Quite excited but a bit uncertain	1,011 (40.3%)
Quite concerned	201 (8%)
Very concerned	54 (2.2%)
No opinion/not sure	221 (8.8%)

Q6 To what extent do you agree with this statement: 'I believe these models are suitable for our new ways of working'?

Response	Count	Percentage
Strongly agree	766	(30.7%)
Agree	1,375	(55.1%)
Neither agree or disagree	261	(10.5%)
Disagree	70	(2.8%)
Strongly disagree	25	(1%)
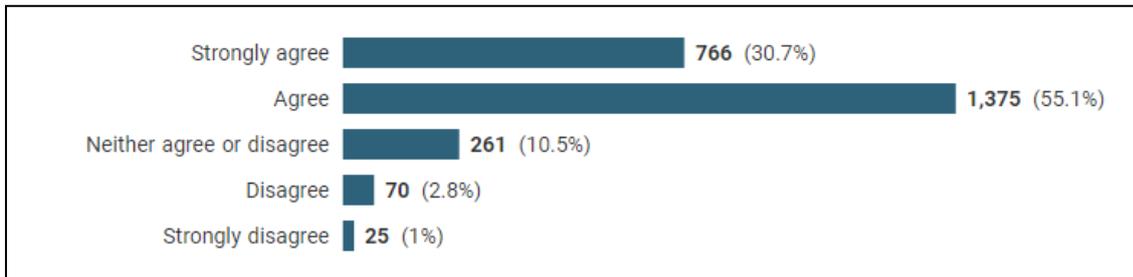
Q8 We plan to establish an ongoing feedback arrangement to allow us to review and make improvements to new ways of working. What would be your preferred way to provide feedback? (Please tick all that apply)

Response	Count	Percentage
Regular surveys	2,051	(81.8%)
An online open feedback channel	1,019	(40.7%)
By email to an email address provided	735	(29.3%)
Via my manager	713	(28.5%)
I don't want to provide feedback	24	(1%)
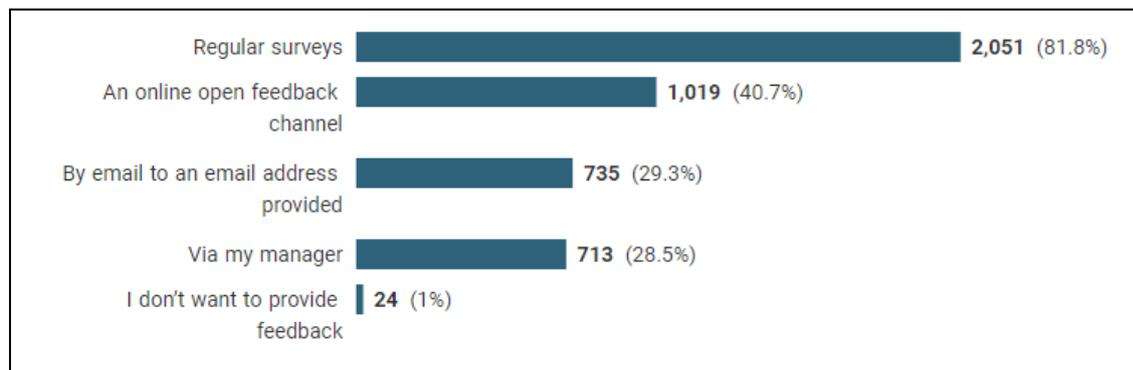
Q9 Thinking about the general approach to making decisions about working arrangements and about the models of working arrangements being considered, what do you think might be the impact on equality and diversity?

Response	Count	Percentage
Positive impact	807	(32.3%)
Both positive and negative impacts	839	(33.6%)
No view/not sure	782	(31.3%)
Negative impact	67	(2.7%)
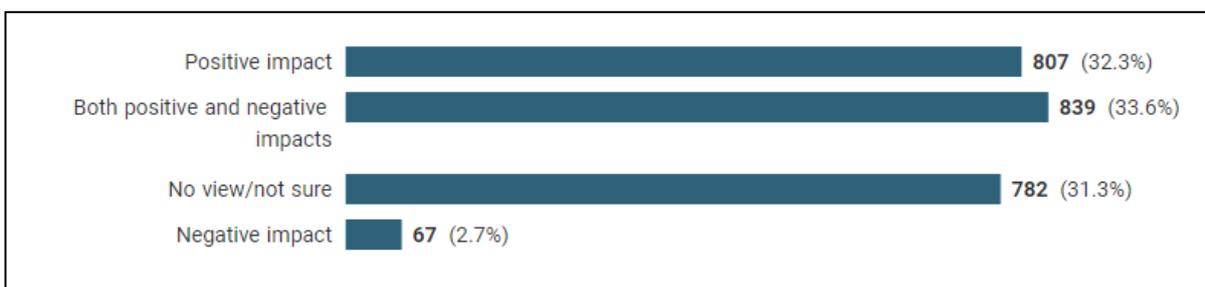
NWW Staff Survey: free text analysis

**Q3a Do you have any further comments on how these decisions are made?**

544 responses

Follows Q3 How satisfied are you with the proposed approach for agreeing how decisions are made: 81.8% Satisfied or very satisfied; 4% unsatisfied or very unsatisfied

Fairness and consistency in decision making is the largest single theme to which comments relate (175). Within this theme, a large number of people wanted **robust framework and guidance with clear 'rules' and parameters** as a way to ensure as much fairness and consistency within teams and departments and across the University (60).

41 people expressed concern that **managers' own personal preferences** around working arrangements would form the basis of decisions and while for some a robust framework and guidance is seen as the way to prevent this. Others **(35)** see a need for a system of **transparency and oversight of decisions** at a higher level within the management structure with suggested approaches including managers having to justify a decision not to allow a preferred way of working or **a system of appeal.** Others **(27)** think that there should be a set of **options that the University supports for everyone and which individuals can choose from or that flexible working should be the default option with anything else having to be justified**

Related to this is the view that the approach should be underpinned by a **strategic statement or direction from the University's senior leadership** that sets out what the University supports and what its expectations are in terms of 'flexible working'.

Some feel the approach currently does not represent something new as all of what is proposed is possible via the formal flexible working request process and that the opportunities to build on all of the positive things about how we have worked during the pandemic will be lost as most managers will want to return to the 'old ways'. There was concern expressed that the needs and expectations of academics and service users and the **University's mission should be central to the decision making.**

Another theme was the **level of decision making** with mixed views about whether this was the best approach. There was support for **local decisions (54) where knowledge about customer, business operations and individuals was greatest but concern that this would lead to inconsistency between teams and in departments and across the University**. Some felt that the senior leader for the area should set parameters within which those making decisions should work while others felt that the direction should come from the centre.

There were some concerns expressed about the **difficulty of balancing the needs of individuals** and their preferences with each other and with the needs of the teams and the **burden on team leaders both in terms of the time involved and the skills required and additional support required.**

Other concerns raised included:

- impact on team relationships, both between individuals who and between individuals and their line managers if preferences could not be accommodated.
- Impact of a multitude of different working arrangements on intra and inter team working
- The need for extra support for line managers both in decision making and managing a team with a range of working arrangements
- Costs to individuals

- Managing hybrid working with two main themes being around managing meetings where some are on site and some joining remotely and ensuring that the equipment and IT is in place to support this and providing office space configured to allow quiet working without disruption from online meetings.

There was support for taking **individual circumstances (**31**)** into account in decision making including health, concerns about safe return, caring responsibilities, disabled people's needs. At the same time, some people were concerned that people with children, for example, would have their preferences prioritised and would be denied the opportunity for flexible working in order to enable their colleagues requests to be met.

Other comments related **taking into account an individual's health and wellbeing**, including any concerns about exposure to COVID, use of public transport, whether someone had received their vaccine yet

It was suggested by some people that **meeting individual needs** should be added as a fourth consideration to those listed in Q3 of the survey

Q4 Are there any particular areas of guidance that you think may be missing?

711 responses

A key theme, which generated the most comments was **managing and learning to accommodate hybrid working** (156).

Guidance was sought on how to make this work in practice:

- including the provision of equipment and IT and training to use it
- the configuration of space to better meet the needs of hybrid working
- How to ensure that team cohesion and team relationships are maintained.

The importance of taking account of **individual personal circumstances** in decision making was also a significant theme (81) and included considerations around health, CEV, people who were anxious about returning or may need to phase their return as well as the needs of disabled people, and people with caring responsibilities.

Areas where it was felt guidance should be provided included:

- Meeting etiquette when using teams and when running hybrid meetings
- Expectations around remote working such as core hours and availability, and visibility to colleagues of working hours and availability time spent traveling to the office for meetings, remote location in terms of geography
- Performance management and supervision of staff working remotely
- Contracts for new staff and induction arrangements
- Costs of working arrangements for individuals e.g. travel for people working a large proportion of their time on site and costs of remote working for others
- Travel and transport is a recurring theme throughout the survey, with people raising issues of safety on public transport, the suggestion that the University enter into discussion with local transport providers about more flexible season ticket provision, review of the Universities own parking permit system, the need to reduce travel for environmental impact

- Guidance on how departments should pay for the costs of equipment etc. to support new ways of working
- Reviewing work processes and making the best of lessons learned.
- Guidance on how to consult with stakeholders
- Clarity on timing of return to work and how this links with BCP levels, a return to lockdown or stricter restrictions
- Safe working in the office – including maintaining first aider provision and guidance around CEV and people who are not comfortable returning to the office because e.g. they have not had their vaccine yet or do not feel safe on public transport

Q7 Do you have any concerns about these options (the 4 models) or specific points about team working and cohesion

981 responses

The most controversial model was the 'majority remote':

164 people felt that the definitions of models of working needed to be changed or that the suggested percentages relating to the roles each was likely to apply to should be removed or changed. Of the comments in this area, **the majority related to the statement that the number of roles that majority remote working would apply to was 'small' (118)**. These people disagreed that only a small number of roles would be suited to this or felt that this pre-judged the situation before going through the process and that this undermined the suggestion that decisions would be reached through discussion. People also felt that most admin roles had proved that they could be done remotely the majority of the time and that an opportunity was being missed to do something different. Some commented that the first three models were already available to people and the 'majority remote' was the only new or different way of working.

Some people thought that model three and model four were confusing as anything over 50% is majority remote working and model three (20%-80%) therefore overlaps with and contradicts model 4 in terms of how many roles it would be suited to. A small number of people did not find the inclusion of percentages helpful either because they raised expectations that for example, 80% remote working was available as a default option or because it was confusing in the context of part-time.

28 people commented specifically on the need to ensure that overall, whatever models were in place, **the general approach was agile and flexible** to allow people to trial new arrangements and change them if they did not work well. A '**flexible remote' option was suggested** to enable people to work from home or on-site as required without having to adopt a regular fixed pattern. Working arrangements should be able to be changed to accommodate changes in personal circumstances and team requirements, such as to cover people on sick leave or to manage peaks or because a particular project required different working arrangements. Flexibility could also be over a longer period % remote working over a term or month allow for a week when the whole team would be on site.

97 people expressed concern over the impact of remote working on team relationships and team (and 20 said it should not be overemphasised and they felt this had been better while working remotely.) The main concerns were:

- Impact on team relationships if people did not meet in-person
- Impact on collaboration, creativity and informal problem solving

- Impact on communications – and one person suggested that University-wide best practice guidance on internal team communications would be needed/helpful
- Impact on team relationships of conflict over working arrangements

Other impacts of remote working that were commented on included:

- Impact on inter-team working
- Impact of empty buildings and sense of community for those working in them
- Impact on local economy of remote working
- Impact on new starters in terms of induction, meeting colleagues and learning on the job
- Access to personnel and career development

Some people (39) suggested that there would be benefit in there being day(s) each week, or other frequency, when the whole team should be on site.

Fairness and consistency was again a theme in this section with 40 people expressing concerns about on more of the following

- Fairness and consistency in general and the need for a robust framework and guidance
- A belief that a manager's personal preference will form the basis pf decisions
- The need to ensure that **all** staff have opportunities for remote and flexible working including, specifically, staff on lower grades

Q 9a Please tell us any thoughts you have on the impact on Equality and Diversity

829 responses

Follows the closed question 'what do you think might be the impact on equality and diversity?'

Positive – 32.3%
Both positive and negative 33.6%
Negative – 2.7%
No view/not sure 31.3%

The comments in this section reflected the responses to the closed question in that there was a perceived to be a balance between positive and negative impacts with each positive having a potential negative counter-effect and vice versa.

Responses indicate that it is anticipated that the NWW framework and guidance will have **greatest positive impact in terms of quality and Diversity for carers (172) and for disabled people and people managing health and mental health issues (112)**.

Greater availability of flexible working arrangements was seen as helping these groups to access a wider range of roles as well as supporting their management of their personal circumstances. Some people also noted that by 'normalising' flexible working arrangements, the stigma that is often felt by those who have formally sought flexible working and who appear as being treated differently from colleagues would be reduced.

Conversely, unintended negative consequence were also noted including:

- For women, as carers, more easily available flexible working may put pressure on them to take advantage of these and increase the burden of domestic responsibility for them.
- There is also concern that remote working can result in a lack of visibility in the workplace with the result that people are overlooked for personal development and career opportunities. This could disproportionately affect women, disabled people and people who are managing physical and mental health conditions, who may be more likely to work remotely and are groups who may already be disadvantaged in these areas.

58 comments related specifically to financial inequality or resource inequality for:

- people who are unable to provide a home office environment due to lack of space or broadband provisions are prevented from working remotely.
- for people on all grades, and particularly lower grades who are often excluded from accessing flexible working arrangements either because they are unable to secure agreement or because these roles are often ones that are seen as requiring on-site presence.
- additional cost of commuting for people on lower grades but whose roles require them to be on-site.
- It was also noted that there may be a disproportionately negative for women who may be over-represented in roles such as receptionist.

A number of responses (45) noted that more flexible and remote working would **support more diverse recruitment across a range of characteristics** and for people on lower grades for whom living in or commuting to Oxford is too expensive although it was also noted that felt remote working would reduce opportunities to meet and mix with a diverse range of people and that this would have an adverse impact on equality and diversity awareness generally.

Strands running through a number of comments included:

- The need for access to flexible working for all and concern that people without caring responsibilities would not have access to remote working due to priority being given to people with caring responsibilities
- The importance of ensuring that 'enablers' such as appropriate IT and office equipment, wellbeing support and personal development and training, particularly around working from home are in place to avoid a positive impact becoming a negative
- Ensuring that managers have sufficient knowledge and training in E&D to enable them to make appropriate decisions.

The comments received in this section of the survey will be used to inform the Equalities Impact Assessment of the NWW framework and guidance.